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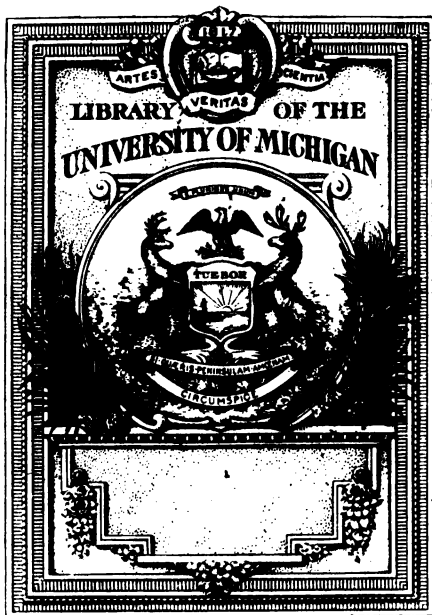
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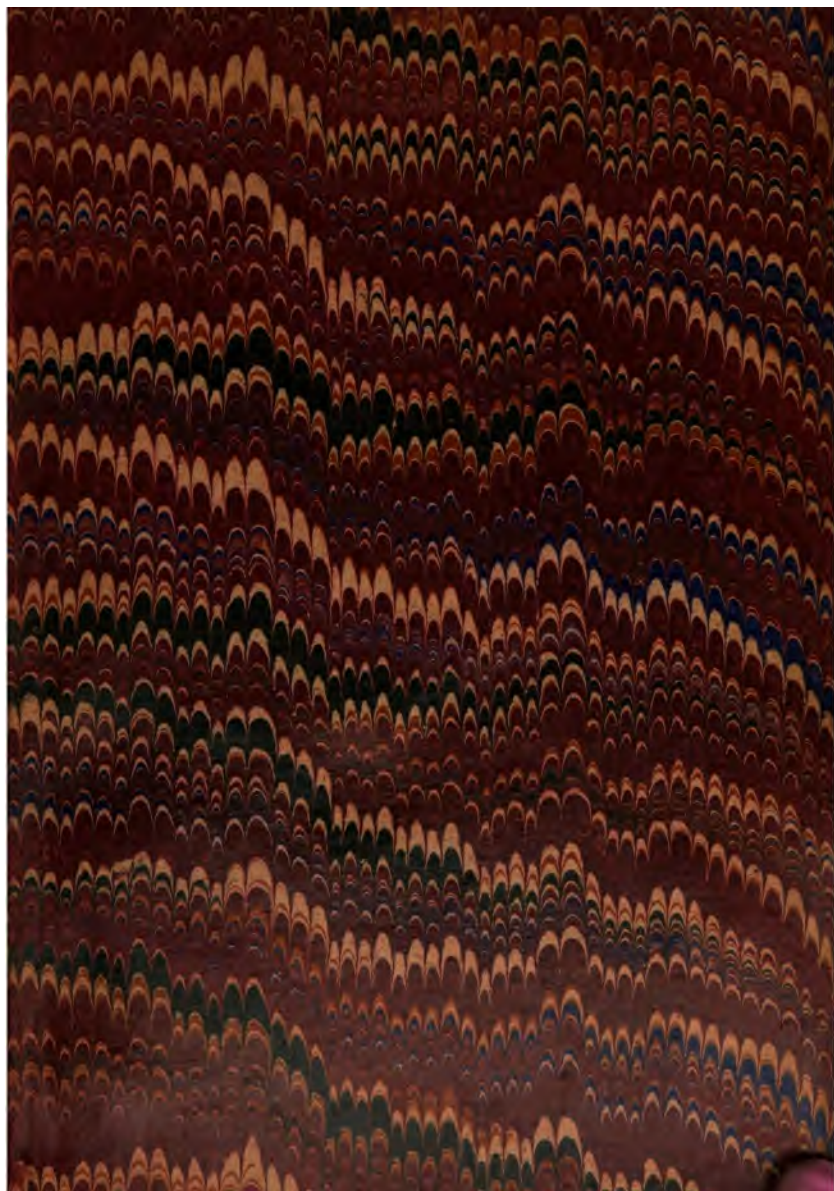
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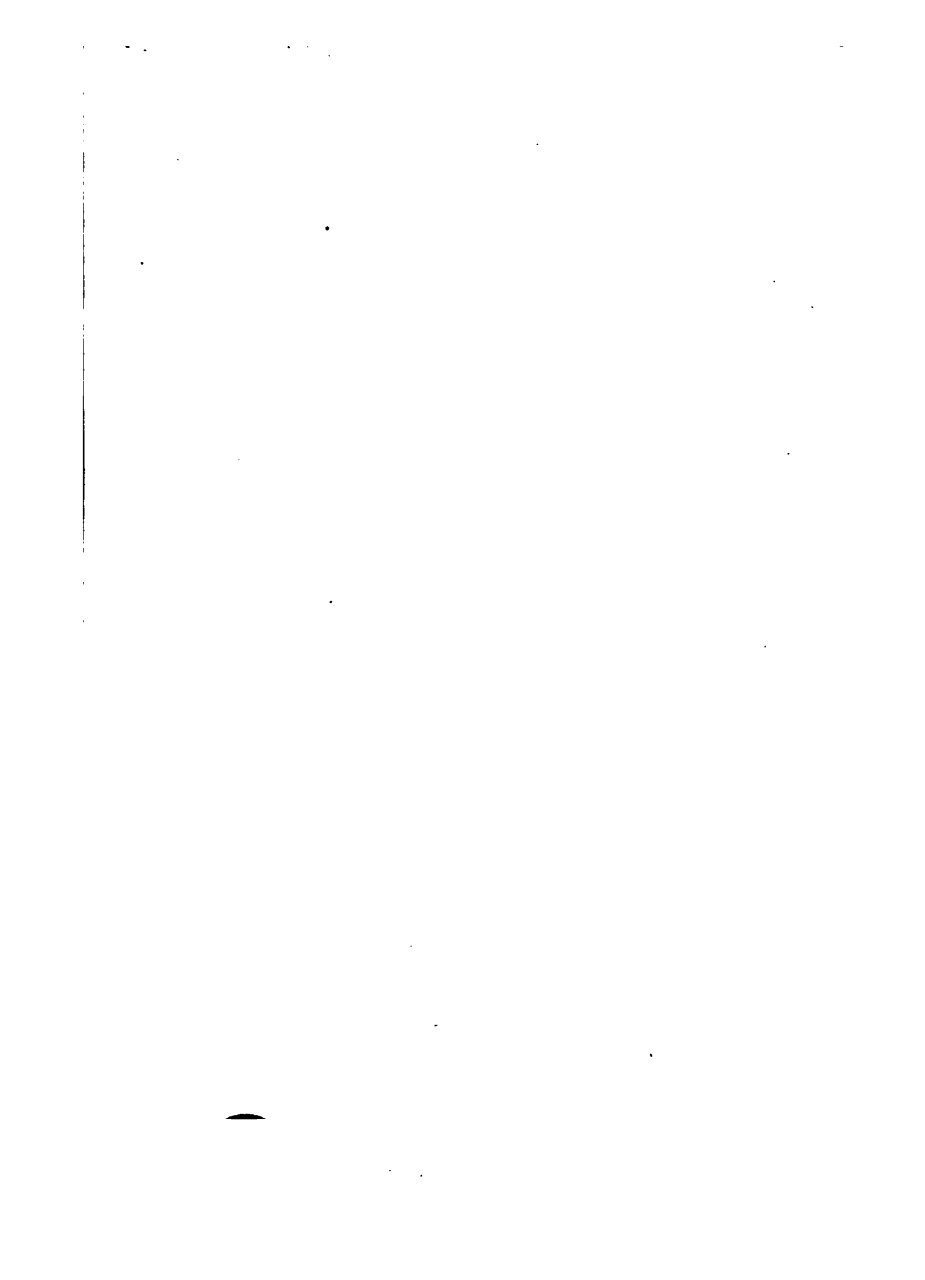
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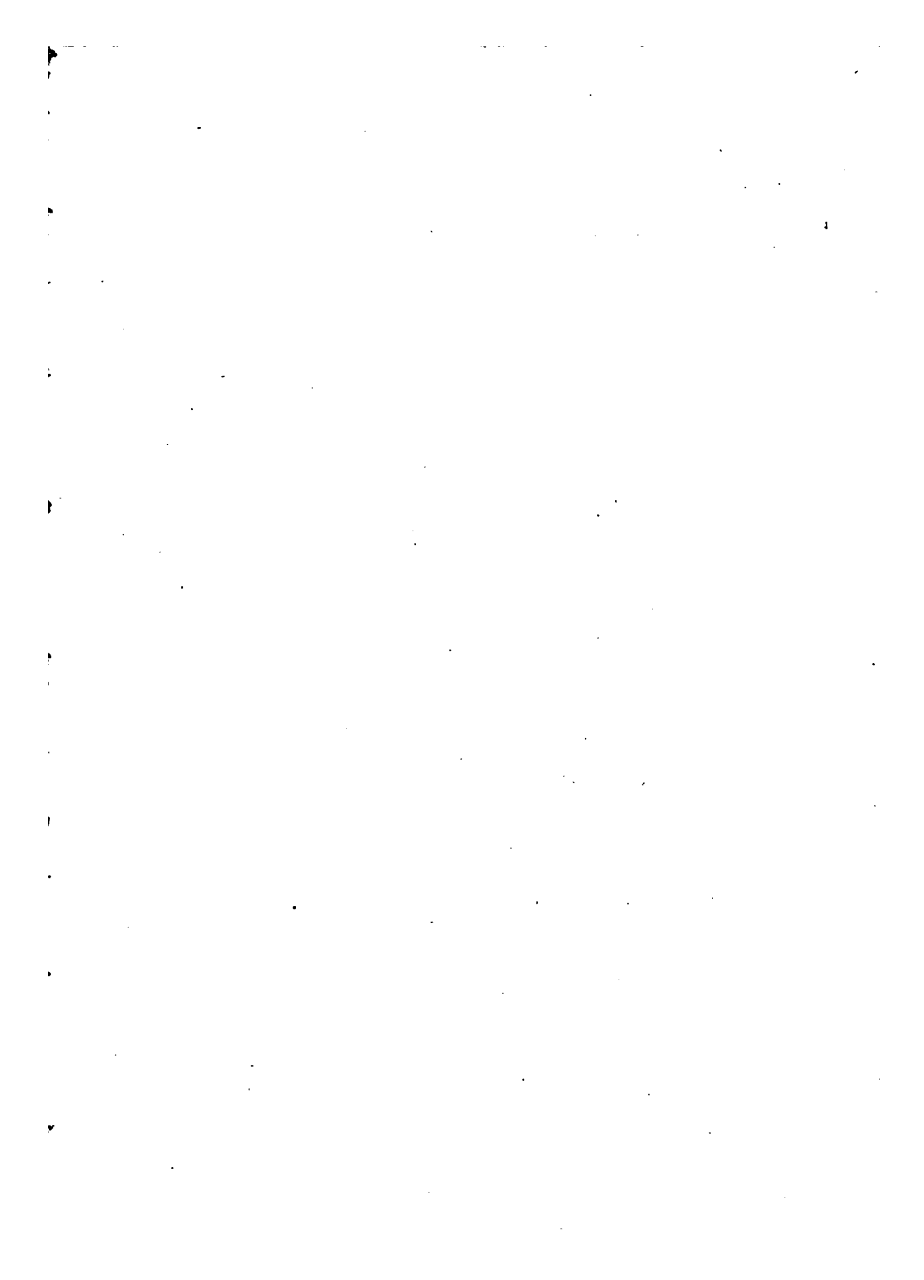




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MORTIMER COLLINS:
HIS LETTERS AND FRIENDSHIPS.

LONDON:
GILBERT AND RIVINGTON, PRINTERS,
ST. JOHN'S SQUARE.





Mortimer Collins

MORTIMER COLLINS:

HIS LETTERS AND FRIENDSHIPS,

WITH SOME ACCOUNT OF HIS LIFE.

Collins, Frances (Cotton) "Mrs. Mortimer Collins"

EDITED BY

FRANCES COLLINS.



IN TWO VOLUMES.

VOL I.

London :

SAMPSON LOW, MARSTON, SEARLE, & RIVINGTON,

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1877.

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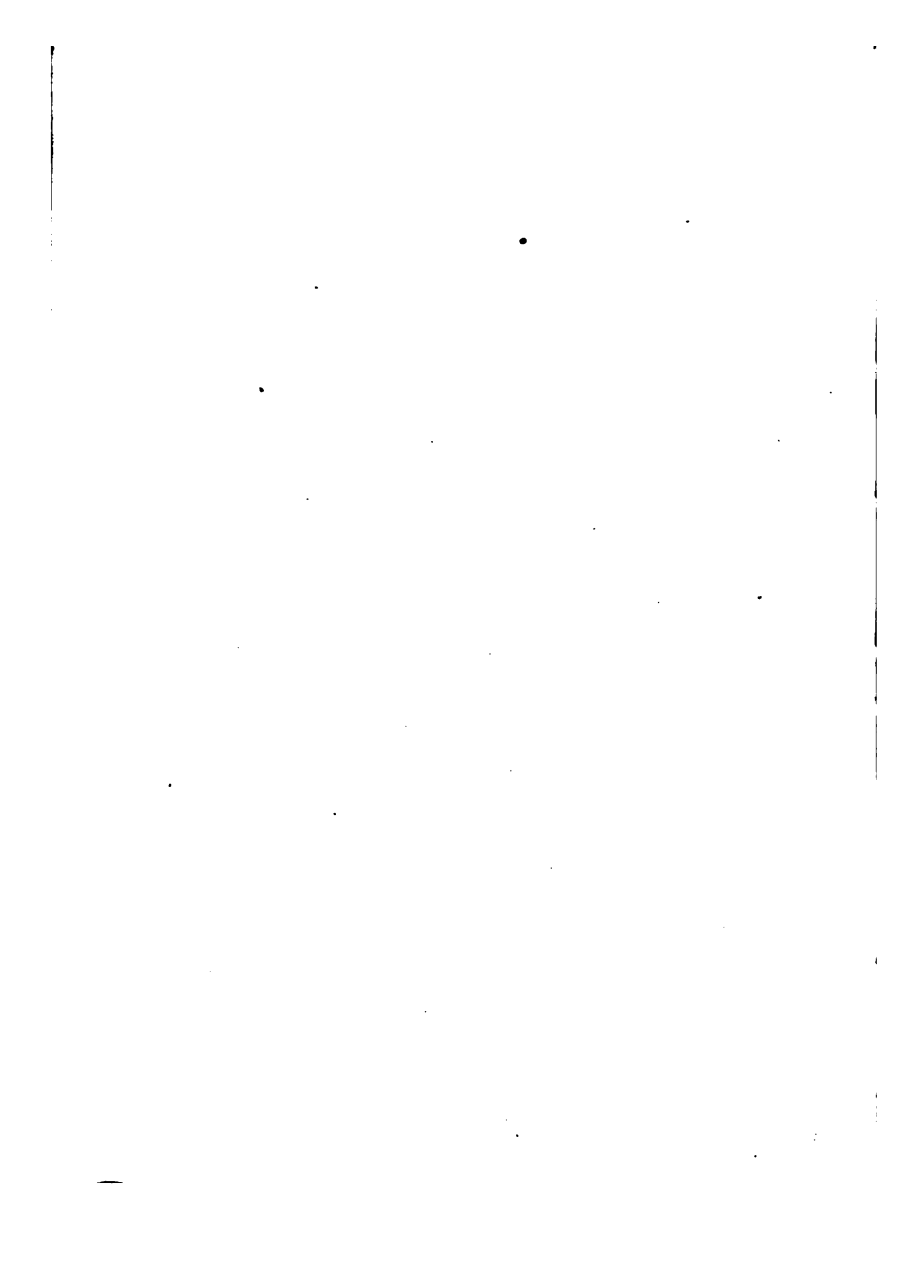
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TO
RICHARD DODDRIDGE BLACKMORE,

THIS BOOK

IS

DEDICATED.



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MORTIMER COLLINS:

HIS LETTERS AND FRIENDSHIPS, WITH SOME
ACCOUNT OF HIS LIFE.

CHAPTER I.

HIS CHARACTER AND APPEARANCE.

My work must commence clumsily with an apology. I fear lest I may annoy the reader with too frequent allusions to myself. It is difficult to leave myself out in writing of my husband, as we were inseparable companions and were scarcely ever apart for an hour during the eight years of our married life.

But that I should offer to the public any details of the life of Mortimer Collins requires no apology, since no one need read the book who is not interested in him. That there are many interested in him I have good reason to

know from the many kindly words and deeds said and done; in some cases anonymously.

I do not propose to write the life of my husband, because it was simply the life of a hardworking man of letters; but his mode of living is worth recording.

At the time of his death a notice in one of the papers concluded in the following manner:—

A group of sad faces stood round the open grave in Petersham churchyard, where, on Tuesday, were laid Mortimer Collins's remains; and these mourners—many of them fellow-workers—felt that, though the charming essay be absent from this or that periodical, the greatest and most poignant loss to them would be the burly figure and the gentle and poetic spirit that were wont to greet one on the lawn at Knowl Hill, and make a day spent there an idyl thereafter to be conspicuous amidst the prose of work-a-day existence.

It is the idyllic life at Knowl Hill that I would describe, and I fear I have not the power to write of it as I felt it. It may be said that the private life of a man, and the history of his friendships with people unknown to the world can be of little general interest. But there was something so remarkable in Mortimer Collins's mode of life—so different from the ordinary

everyday prose existence—that a description of it will perhaps be at least as interesting as an ordinary three-volume novel. And perhaps something may be learnt from it. Here was a man struggling very hard for a living. For eight years before his death he had taken no holiday. The almost incredible quantity of work done during those years shows his great industry. Yet he was always happy, and found time to give a great deal of happiness to his friends and others. Notwithstanding hard work and worry he made a poem of life. He never grumbled at misfortune, but bore everything patiently, and looked at the best side of the world.

Some short account of his early life may be of interest; but before commencing it, perhaps it will be as well to give some idea of his character as seen by others and myself. In the kindly notice of him in *Punch* it was said,—

He was a man who, in an unconventional way, deeply believed in God, and strove to do his duty honestly and punctually by his employers, loving his family and friends: variously accomplished, happy under hard labour, and helpful to all he could help, by word or deed.

Mr. G. A. Sala wrote in the *Illustrated London News* as follows :—

He was one of the most versatile men I ever met with, overflowing with information on almost every conceivable topic. He was a ripe scholar, a skilled mathematician, an antiquary, a botanist, a most melodious and facile versifier, a humourist, and a wit.

A writer in the *World* says,—

I am without the particulars of the death of my old friend Mortimer Collins; it must have happened with little warning, as he was a man of splendid *physique*, and I had a letter from him full of his usual spirits, only a few days ago. He was an erratic and eccentric creature; intensely Bohemian, save in his domestic relations, in which he was a model of constancy and kindness; genial, guileless, and loveable as a great Newfoundland dog; a man of good classical attainments and much quaint ornithological, and botanical lore.

In the *Press and St. James's Chronicle*, for which he had written an article called "Adversaria" weekly, for nine years, a writer remarks,—

He loved birds and flowers; the robins would perch upon his shoulder as he wrote, and the blackbirds and thrushes sport around him; and a sparrow with a broken limb I have seen him tenderly fondle and strive

to restore. He loved God, and he loved men and women; he loved aught and all that loved him.

And this lovingness and loveableness is the very prime of poetry. In the glow and fervour of the nature that loves, all things are seen as in an enchanted land; earth is bare only because we are barren; to the man of unselfish love, to the poet of the true poet nature, all things are warm and dear and lovely.

He was in the world, and the world knew him not, as it knows not and cannot know its rarest visitants. But unto such as did know him, to them he gave or fostered a power of sonship of poetry; the modern-morbidness of life he banished, and its glories he loved to make appear.

The *Hornet* says,—

Mr. Collins was a big-hearted, boyish man, and he had some very devoted friends and one or two very bitter enemies.

A writer in *Berrow's Worcester Journal* says,—

Mortimer Collins had some very bitter enemies; men who followed him with malignant inuendo, falsehood, and calumny; but he had some true friends, and the glimpses he has given us of domestic felicity show that in the closest relation of life he was happy and contented. He was fond of all kinds of animals and birds with an almost passionate fondness, and they repaid his loving attention by the most winsome familiarity and trust. If "he prayeth best who loveth best all

things both great and small," Mortimer Collins indeed fulfilled Coleridge's ideal.

A writer in *Lloyd's* observes that he was—

A genial hearty companion, an ever-ready comforter and helper, an inimitable host, a firm and affectionate friend.

And the same writer continues,—

We are confident that there are thousands of persons who, having read one or some of the brilliant pages ever flowing from an inexhaustible store, will hear that Mortimer Collins is dead with profound regret, and not having known the man, will yet feel almost personal grief at his loss. The buoyant kindly nature that made itself appreciated in the ordinary intercourse of author and reader, attracted a rare gathering of friends about it, and Mortimer Collins's death leaves a blank in many hearts that cannot be filled up.

I do not want to try and prove that my husband was a great and good man. He had faults—very big faults—but a man who had so much room in his heart for love, and was so beloved, must have been of no common sort. In the many very kind letters which I have received from people unknown to me there is continual reference to the feeling of love the writers had for my husband; and people who

had seen but little of him have expressed over and over again how much they loved him.

This quality in a man may to some appear foolish. There are grave, serious people who have so much to do, or who make so much work for themselves, that they have no time for love and admiration of God's creatures. To such people Mortimer Collins would no doubt appear an insignificant man, for they would have no time to understand him. I well remember on one occasion when a lady, who was a district visitor, and a general helper in the parish, called on us, she asked what bird was singing so sweetly in the tree by the gate?

"Don't you know the robin's note?" remarked Mortimer Collins.

"Does the robin sing?" said the lady; "I was not aware that it did."

This lady had lived in the country for nearly half a century without noticing the robin's song. She had devoted her life to the good of the parish; visiting the poor, lecturing them, distributing tracts. She denounced Mortimer Collins as a bad man, judging him chiefly from the fact of his not going to church so regularly as he ought to do. And yet no doubt he had

the power of bringing people nearer to God, even by his very reverence for a robin's song, than the lady had by all her years of parish work. His reverence for everything in nature was sufficient to convince even an atheist of the presence of God. I do not think an atheist could have spent half an hour with Mortimer Collins in his garden without being convinced. Not long before his death he wrote:—

The contact of man with his Creator is, in my mind, the primal idea—the one thought that should never be forgotten. Everywhere God speaks to man. Those who do not hear that speech in every song of bird or burst of flower are simply blind and deaf to what the Master gives us.

The writer who says he was a “big-hearted, boyish man,” describes him well. He was like a frank, open-hearted boy, never concealing his opinions, which sometimes caused him to give offence. He was almost childish in some things; he could not understand business or money matters, and for some years never carried money, but allowed his wife to manage everything for him. It would sometimes chance that he had an odd sixpence or shilling in his pocket,

and he would take it out and show it to his friends with childish glee.

There were kind people who were pleased to minister to his wants, and it was delightful to see him opening a parcel containing a present. But his chief excitement was when he had a new book coming out. He would be anxious to see the cover and general appearance of the book, and when it arrived he would immediately write his own and his wife's names in it, and then proceed to carefully cut and read it as if it were something quite new.

All this childishness was pleasant in him because it was in contrast with a fine brain; in the same way that his gentleness and tenderness were so pretty in contrast with his big strong body.

He was made up of great strength and great weakness. His faults were quite on the surface for every one to see. He was incapable of meanness or malice or any petty vice. He abhorred hypocrisy and cant and slander. His faults were such as to make his friends anxious for his own sake, but not such as to make him less loved.

He was a fine, well-made man, over six feet

in height, with a handsome face and well-shaped head. For some years he had dressed always in the same fashion: a black velvet coat, a white waistcoat, a shirt with large open collar, light brown trousers, and a straw hat with red ribbon. This costume never varied in winter or summer, save that his coats by continual exposure to the weather soon turned all manner of colours. He looked very picturesque in his own garden, and in the village, but when he went to London (and his visits there for eight years were rare) he looked out of place. But however he was dressed, he had an unmistakably aristocratic appearance.

It is probable that his fine bodily and mental powers brought him foes, for some of his enemies seem to have had no reason for hating him but envy.

No amount of trouble or hard work affected his happy disposition, and there are people to whom such a disposition is irritating.

CHAPTER II.

HIS EARLY LIFE.

MORTIMER COLLINS was born in Plymouth on the 29th of June, 1827. His father, Francis Collins, was a solicitor, and of a Cornish family; his mother was of the Devonshire family of Branscombes, and his maternal grandmother was of the Mortimers of Dorset. His father seems to have been a good mathematician, and to have accounted himself somewhat of a poet, as he published a volume of verse entitled "Spiritual Songs," which was brought out in Plymouth in 1824.

He died of consumption in 1839. Mortimer was his only child. The boy received his education at various private schools, but chiefly at Totteridge Park, in Hertfordshire, and with a Mr. Harris, in Westbury, with whom he remained five years. He seems to have been

famous at the various schools for his clever verses, which often got him into trouble, as they were sometimes satires on his masters. Before he left Mr. Harris he had contributed verses to *Punch* and *Fraser's Magazine*, and many articles to a local paper, the *Bath and Cheltenham Gazette*. To this he alludes in one of his books, where he says,—

I have known a school-boy deservedly flogged for neglecting his classics, the neglect having arisen from his writing certain newspaper articles which the school-master who switched him greatly admired.

I have heard him relate how that on a Good Friday, while he was at school, he received a cheque for three pounds, for some literary work, and that while out for a long walk with the boys on that day, he treated them all to Good Friday buns and ginger beer, with the proceeds of his work.

He has given sketches of his school life in various of his books, and has described school-boys very much like himself. In "Mr. Carington," talking of school-days, he says,—

Ah! how careless we all are about those happy days of youth! What a pleasure it is to be a fool—to rob orchards—to make false quantities—to hate Horace

and Euclid—to be flogged—to enjoy half-holidays—to get up stealthily at midnight in search of mushrooms—to keep forbidden ferrets in a box under your bed—to smoke bad cigars and be horribly sick—to learn a few things consciously and many things unconsciously! I should like to be a school-boy once again.

His success in literature while a school-boy, tempted him, when he left school, to go to London and make his living as a journalist; but his mother not liking this mode of life, induced him to accept a situation as a tutor, which she had found for him. While engaged in teaching he did not give up his literary work.

A friend (Mr. Alexander Brown) who speaks of having known Mortimer Collins thirty years ago, writes thus:—

When we first knew him he was usher in a school, “a marvellous boy,” now forwarding the present writer—then editor and proprietor of a paper—translations from Anacreon. “Who translates these?” asked the late Mr. Lant Carpenter, also a contributor. “Mr. Mortimer Collins,” was the reply. “They are wonderful,” said our reverend interrogator, himself a translator of no mean order. “Who writes these translations for you?” asked Mr. Craik, a coadjutor of the benevolent Mr. Müller, of the Orphan Home, Bristol. “Mortimer Collins,” was our response. “Mortimer Collins! Does his family belong to Bristol?” “Yes,”

we remarked. "Oh, that is the boy whose mother asked me to read Virgil with him, and when I came to read with him, he knew Virgil better than myself."

When we think of the weary hours he must have spent in his school days to help us in our arduous literary work, we confess that no language can express our admiration of his greatness of heart.

He visited the present writer once in Weston-super-Mare, was a guest of his for one fortnight, occasionally cruising about channel. "Can I help you," he asked, "to do the Guide Book to Weston and the neighbourhood?"

"Yes, you can," we instantly ejaculated, "do me a legend about Weston and its neighbourhood;" when some verses after Ingoldsby were produced, entitled "The Lost Hound."

* * * * *

At that time Mr. Collins was a contributor to *Fraser*, as his father, we understand, had been before him. He was also a writer for several provincial papers; and like old Samuel Johnson, who wrote serious and philosophic articles in promiscuous companies—in ball-rooms and the rest, Collins wrote articles, literary and political, in the midst of lively conversation. "Mortimer," the present writer said, "you must cease instructing boys, you must instruct men. Your vocation is the press: you are bound to become author and journalist." These words, though prophetic, were not singularly prophetic, because genius and work were both in him.

* * * * *

Before this Professor Wilson (Christopher North)

had pronounced him to be "a clever boy," for he had ere this written and printed a long poem, *On Windermere*. In personal appearance Collins had the advantage of most men. He was tall in stature. His head was high, broad, and compact, covered by a goodly crop of brown hair. The eyes were grey, expressive of thought, but at times lit up with the fine fire of genius. The complexion was pale, or rather sallow; the features even and well-defined. His neckerchief, of buff, hung loosely in long ties over his breast. At that time, "in his green and salad days," as he afterwards styled them, we knew ourselves to be in the presence of a youth of promise, and predicted for him the literary success which he afterwards—though not to the full—achieved. Superior to most of his compeers in polite learning on the London press, his company was courted; but in a large number of the lesser lights he excited a maddening jealousy.

* * * * *

Never probably existed a more unselfish soul than Mortimer Collins. He was prodigal of his mental gifts, as nature was to him eminently prodigal.

The power here mentioned that Mortimer Collins had of writing on any subject, in the midst of conversation, remained with him to the last. He never required a separate room for study, or to be by himself while writing. Half-a-dozen people might be talking in the room, and although he appeared to be absorbed in his

work, he would suddenly make some remark, showing he had heard all the conversation. The only thing that would annoy him on such occasions would be a harsh voice. That would irritate him so much that he would throw down his pen, and leave the room.

Mr. Brown again gives a reminiscence of his early friendship with Mortimer. He says, writing in a Weston paper,—

When the late Mortimer Collins, the poet and novelist, was on a visit to me, nearly twenty-five years ago I should think—or possibly more—we hired a post-chaise to go to Cheddar. On reaching the place, my then family connexions brought me somewhat in contact with the Clark family: and on inquiring for the old gentleman, we were politely conducted to a small schoolroom, where a tea-meeting was being held.

Mr. Clark, senior, a little man, dressed in knee-breeches, and with eyes sparkling and lively, received us with the utmost warmth and cordiality. Tea being over, and one or two short speeches delivered, Mr. Clark, turning round to me as being the most devout—at least in appearance—whispered into my ear, “Just a few words to the children.” Never having had any what are called “religious impressions,” I declined the invitation with a smile, and fixed the old man’s attention upon the poet, who, with his grey eyes and solemn countenance, rose and delivered one of the most touching and beautiful addresses to children

I ever heard in my life. When he sat down, I whispered, "Mortimer, you've mistaken your vocation; you ought to be a bishop." But no sooner had I said this than Mr. Clark, senior, rose to his feet, and said, with tears streaming down his furrowed cheeks, "So long as Cheddar was Cheddar, they should never forget the name of Mortimer Collins."

Mortimer many years after this referred to his visit to Cheddar, and the delivery of his great speech.

When Mortimer Collins was twenty-two years old, he married Susannah, daughter of the late John Hubbard, and widow of the Rev. H. J. Crump.

This lady died in 1867. One daughter was the issue of this marriage. Soon after his marriage he went to Guernsey, and was appointed mathematical master of Queen Elizabeth's College there; but he continued to contribute to various newspapers and magazines.

It was while in Guernsey that he published his first volume of verse, "Idyls and Rhymes."

He left Guernsey in 1856, and during the next ten years he edited various provincial newspapers, and was well known on the London press. He was an able political writer, and wrote so many political squibs, that he was once shown a small room, almost entirely

papered with them. He was always a Tory, and boasted that while yet a school-boy, he managed to change the politics of a provincial paper from Liberal to Conservative.

His lyrics and epigrams in the *Owl* are still remembered by scholarly men. He wrote a great deal in the *Church and State Review*, which Archdeacon Denison edited; also in the *Realm*, which had a brief, but brilliant career. In the *Press* also many of his political verses and articles appeared. In the *Globe* he wrote the first leading article, when that paper changed from Liberal to Conservative, and was a constant contributor to it for some years.

In 1860 he published his second volume of verse, called "Summer Songs" [Saunders and Otley]. In 1865 he published his first novel, "Who is the Heir?" It was first printed in the *Dublin University Magazine* and afterwards in three-volume form.

Amongst his Magazine articles, written during these years, his description of his walks through various counties are still remembered by many with admiration. He relates what he actually did and saw. He had the same ease

in walking as in everything else, and could keep
L up an average of thirty miles a day for a week.

He had so easy a stride that when he was doing four miles an hour he seemed to be going at a very moderate pace, and he could walk six miles an hour without difficulty. ? On one occasion, when he lost the last train at Paddington, he walked down to Knowl Hill, during the night, a distance of over thirty miles; and on another he walked from London to Brighton, stopping only half-an-hour on the way. It was in 1862 he first took the cottage at Knowl Hill, but he did not live there regularly until his second marriage in 1868. In the spring of 1868 was published his second novel, "Sweet Anne Page" [Hurst and Blackett].

A very grave objection has been made to this book by some critics, an objection that cannot be made to any that followed it. It is said to be not sufficiently decorous in tone. In after years Mortimer Collins was often unpleasantly reminded of this by the critics, and in 1875 he made the following reply—

When I see London journalists raking up an old book of mine (which had its follies) I am simply amused. Let them laugh at me: why not? A lustrum and more has

passed. "I am no more ashamed of having been a Republican," said Southey, "than I am of having been a boy." And I am no more ashamed of having written a certain book, which these people bring up against me at intervals, than Mr. Gladstone is of "The Church considered in its Relations with the State" (1840), or Mr. Disraeli of "Vivian Grey" (1825). A man whose youth has no follies will in his maturity have no power. *Sic itur ad astra*. Sow your wild oats, and grow the wheat of wealth on the glorious grapes of genius.

In the summer of 1868, after his second marriage, Mortimer Collins left his London haunts, and went to live altogether at his cottage in Berkshire, which he never left, but for occasional short visits, till his death.

The following notice written at his death gives a good idea of the quantity of work done during the eight years at Knowl Hill :—

Of late years we have missed his stalwart figure from the London haunts, but Mr. Collins was far from being idle. In his pleasant Berkshire cottage at Knowl Hill, on the old Bath Road, amidst scenes and surroundings, which he has sketched with wondrous fidelity in the novel at present publishing in the *Pictorial World*, he sought health and quietude, but the pen was plied unceasingly in this retreat, novel after novel issuing from his hand, in addition to contributions innumerable to periodical literature. Amongst the novels may be mentioned, in 1865, "Who is the Heir?" in 1868, "Sweet

Anne Page," in which his own early career was to a certain extent sketched; in 1869, "The Ivory Gate;" in 1870, "The Vivian Romance;" in 1871, "Marquis and Merchant;" in 1872, "Two Plunges for a Pearl," and "Princess Clarice;" in 1873, "Squire Silchester's Whim," and "Miranda;" in 1874, "Transmigration," and "Frances;" which, with "Sweet and Twenty," published the following year, was written in conjunction with Mrs. Collins. In 1875, "Blacksmith and Scholar;" and 1876, "A Fight with Fortune."

Mr. Collins' novels were eminently original, and therefore failed perhaps to catch the attention of the feminine novel-reader, who requires a certain orthodox standard of namby-pambyism, or sensationalism, but thinking men could not fail to be struck by them. He was undoubtedly the most graceful lyrist of the present day, but unfortunately much of the best of his work is to be found scattered anonymously through the pages of magazines and reviews. His sparkling *vers de société* in the *Owl* did much to help the success achieved by that journalistic anomaly during its brief career, and the same may be said of "Echoes from the Clubs," that "nineteenth century Spectator," as it has been styled. It is to be regretted that, with the exception of those pieces collected in "Idyls and Rhymes," 1855; "Summer Songs," 1860; and "Inn of Strange Meetings," 1871, few of these have been collected; though an Aristophanic stave, "The British Birds," 1872, is also to be counted amongst his poetical works. His numerous essays in the *British Quarterly*, the sparkling letters contributed weekly, under the title of "Adversaria," to the *St. James's Chronicle*, and the "Secret of Long Life"

(1871), which ran to four editions, prove the versatility of his genius. Mr. Collins did not achieve that popularity to which he was justly entitled. He was one of the few writers of the present day utterly independent of any clique, and possessing the courage of his own opinions; a circumstance that told against him in these gregarious days. His frank, outspoken expressions excited the animadversion of men unused to such a style of frankness. But though physically and mentally a hard hitter, he was a fair antagonist, and his judgment was never influenced by outside considerations. In addition to his work as a Conservative journalist on the *Globe*, &c., he had for the last ten years been a weekly contributor to the *St. James's Chronicle*, and for two years and a quarter previously to his death had embellished the pages of *Punch* with a lyric or sonnet each week. He was also engaged on a series of articles for the *World*, and was publishing a novel, "The Village Comedy," written conjointly with Mrs. Collins, in the *Pictorial World*.

CHAPTER III.

LETTERS BEFORE 1868.

THE earliest letter of Mortimer Collins which has been given to me is to Denis Florence MacCarthy.

143, *Strand, London, W.C.*

June 29, 1857.

MY DEAR SIR,—I dare say you will have forgotten me, though your kind appreciation of my verses long ago is a thing I shall never forget. I was talking about you to-day with a great admirer of yours, Mr. Samuel Lover, and being thus reminded of you, it occurred to me to ask a favour of you. I want to get an editorial appointment in Ireland. If you should hear of a vacancy anywhere will you let me know, and give me the benefit of your influence ?

Faithfully yours,

MORTIMER COLLINS.

D. F. MacCarthy, Esq.

Mr. MacCarthy writes to me in explanation of this :—

I have no distinct recollection of the article on his poems to which he refers, although, of course, with all persons who had the good fortune of meeting with them, I was at all times an admirer of their pure spontaneity and ease.

The next is to Frederick Locker, probably written in 1861. Mortimer Collins seldom dated a letter, except with the day of the week.

Granville Road, Wandsworth.

Sunday Afternoon.

MY DEAR SIR,—You have forgotten me, probably, but I have been reminded of you several times lately. Lounging at Thornbury's chambers a month or two ago, I took up your "London Lyrics," which I had never seen before, and was surprised to find myself quoted on p. 13. From Thornbury I learnt who was the "F. L." whose graceful Lyrics I had admired in the "Cornhill." I need hardly tell you that I at once possessed myself of a copy of your charming volume.

To day I have been looking through "Leigh Hunt's Correspondence;" the old poet evidently appreciated you. When are we to have another volume?

I am a settled Londoner now, and hope that some day we may meet.

Faithfully yours,

MORTIMER COLLINS.

Frederick Locker, Esq.

The next is to the late Walter Thornbury,

and was probably written shortly after the previous letter.

70, *Great Russell Street, British Museum,*
Saturday.

MY DEAR THORBURY,—This day week I went down to Brighton, hoping for a fine Sunday by the sea. Not a bit of it! It rained cats and dogs, and blew great guns all day. We know what manner of reading a fellow gets at a hotel. I was at Pegg's Royal York. There was a Guide Book to Brighton. There was an old Post Office Directory. There was a Brighton newspaper of the time of Noah. There was a confounded Medical Journal, full of horrible cases of inherited diseases. There was a ridiculous tract giving fifty reasons against smoking. I should like to make the idiot who wrote it learn by heart your essay on the subject; and finally, believe me, as thou wilt, tis true, there was a loose-leaved, well-read copy of Locker's "London Lyrics!"

Thine,

C.

To the next there is no date; it was written before 1868.

[COPY.]

DEAR LOCKER,—

'Tis an idle night,
I have been resting from my labours;
And a pet book-shelf caught my sight,
Where Præd and you are next door neighbours.

So in these days of maudlin rhyme,
 When half our poets are Empirics,
 I've read for the five hundredth time
 His "Characters," your "London Lyrics."
 Trifles in truth, no passion there,
 No frightful advent of sensation,
 But a most calm and classic air,
 A grace and beauty quite Horatian.
 As Homer's lay of Ilion's towers,
 Shines through the Past with godlike lustre,
 So our Anacreon, crown'd with flowers,
 Will live as long as vine-leaves cluster.
 And so though Browning's mighty line
 Shows him the twin-peak'd mountain's denizen :
 Though fill'd with melody divine
 Is every verse of Alfred Tennyson ;
 Though you are clever, Alick Smith ;
 You also in the unhealthy path you
 Chose for yourself, O Meredith ;
 Though Arnold's great—the classic Matthew ;
 Though petticoated scribblers chime,
 Of whom I yet could never learn a list ;
 Though I myself have written rhyme,
 (Imagine poems by a Journalist !)
 Yet, my dear Locker, sure am I
 Your verse will live till some strange panic come,
 Blow London upward to the sky,
 And sweep away the *Mus. Britannicum*.
 After which doggrel,
 Believe me, faithfully yours,

MORTIMER COLLINS.

The next is to Mr. Locker and was written before 1868. It was afterwards published in the *Globe*.

MR. GLADSTONE IN ROME.

"*Caffè-latte!* I call to the waiter,—*non c'è latte*,
This is the answer he makes me, and this is the sign of
a battle."

Clough in 1848.

(I.)

Old Rome in December, take out your umbrella,
For we picnic no more in CECILIA METELLA,
While flirtation is wholly unheard in the sheeny
And shadowy paths of the Aldobrandini.

MR. LOCKER to Rome a poetical rover,
Has sketch'd us the flirts and the croquet moreover ;
He'll smile as he sees, in the shade of St. Peter's,
How coolly we've stolen his phrases and metres.

But though English are few on the Pincian Hill,
One grave politician is lingering still ;
From Montorio looks down on the Tiber, and thinks
That the problem of Rome beats the *cruz* of the
Sphinx ;

That no one can tell us the ultimate bias
Of the City of CÆSAR and PASQUIN and PIUS ;
That the milk of the She Wolf meant bloodshed and
sorrow,
And—will there be milk at the Caffè to-morrow.

Mr. Locker was a personal friend of Mortimer Collins, and the correspondence continued till the latter's death, but as Mr. Locker expresses it, the letters "almost entirely consist of criticism of living Poets, so they are not ripe for publication."

About two months before his death, Mortimer Collins proposed that he and Mr. Locker should write a series of Horatian Epistles to each other, and publish them month by month in some magazine. Mr. Locker liked the notion, but did not at the moment feel poetical.

One of Mortimer Collins's friends was John Francis Waller, LL.D.

Dr. Waller's own letter will perhaps best describe the friendship.

DEAR MRS. COLLINS,—I send you the few letters of my dear, lamented friend upon which I can lay my hand: they are very precious to me, and I must claim them from you when you have done with them. The reading of them now brings back upon me a flood of memories, very sad, but yet not without a strain of pleasure. To have known so much of him as I did was a happiness; and yet not to have known so much of him as I might (had I been able oftener to accept his loving invitations) is a great sorrow to one now that he is gone. A finer nature, a kindlier heart, a richer

poetic imagination, a more comprehensive intellect, that could at once master the higher truths of science and indulge in the fictions of romance and the charms of song, it never was my privilege to know united in one man. Our intimacy—first through correspondence, and afterwards personal—is of long standing. Its origin was the receipt of an exquisite poem, when I was editor of the *Dublin University Magazine*. The name of “Mortimer Collins” subscribed to it was unknown to me, and little known to the world. But, as the Italian has it, *Al buon vino non bisogna frasca*, the good wine needed no bush, the poem appeared, and therefore he became an occasional, but too rare, correspondent to that periodical. I recall vividly the days—all too few, which I from time to time passed with him at Knowl Hill. A genial welcome, the pleasant conversation, the delightful rambles in that most interesting district, all the beauties and history of which he knew so well and told so happily.

On one of those days we went to Shottesbrook, when he related to me the legend connected with the Church, and which I afterwards published in my “Revelations of Peter Brown.” The letters which I send you are all characteristic; no matter how trivial the subject, there is always the light of genius in them. His high estimate of myself, so generous and cordial, might tempt me to withhold some of them, but it would be affectation to deny that such praise was very gratifying to me.

Believe me, dear Mrs. Collins,
Faithfully yours,

JOHN FRANCIS WALLER.

The following letters to Dr. Waller are without date, but were probably written between 1864 and 1867.

*Knowl Hill, Berkshire,
Wednesday.*

MY DEAR WALLER,—Long ago should I have answered your note, but was engaged in trying to begin several articles. You shall have my likeness in a few days, I hope; meanwhile let me congratulate you on being a deuced deal better looking than I am. What you'll say when you see me done by Apollo I can't conceive.

That "Calneary ticket" must have been mis-sent, never having reached me. I am glad to hear of your second edition, though I should like something *new* from the singer I love so well. Will it soon be ready? I have an article for *Fraser* on hand, wherein I could refer to it. Let me have as early a copy as you can. My *Fraser* article ought to go to the editor in a week. Do you ever mean to come to England? I should like to get you into this village of Berkshire (Bare Oak Shire, and a bare oak divides two parishes at my gate), and take you to the Thames, where Wilkes and Churchill held wild revelry at Medmenham Abbey, and to Burnham Beeches, beloved by Luttrell; and to Windsor Castle, which insists on being the chief object in the landscape, whichever way one looks; and to Bray (you've heard of the Vicar of Bray, a jolly good fellow the present vicar is); and to Reading, and to Oxford, which you may have heard of; and to Maidenhead; but positively I'm out of breath. Come!!!! &c., &c., &c.

I'll promise you a bed ; and some of the best beer in England, which (this will please an Irishman) was brewed in Edinburgh. Wherefore come—stay as long as you like or longer—and I'll revenge myself by writing a poem in your honour. Will you? I have just been reading proof of a kind of Ingoldsby legend entitled, "Hawise," for the *Dublin*. It doesn't look to me as good as I thought it when I wrote it. Do you know, I'm afraid I'm getting old.

Which, by the way, is another reason that I should say come!

Always yours,

MORTIMER COLLINS.

Knowl Hill,

Saturday.

MY DEAR WALLER, —I am ashamed not to have acknowledged your budget, for which many thanks ; but I put off from day to day, expecting a note from Froude. I shall send that buffer an article of my own by to-morrow's post, and will wake him up. The three Mr. Smiths re-appear in capital style, and your humorous version of the devil's mother-in-law puts me out of humour with my own rhymes.

Edmund Yates is in Wales ; and I want to communicate with him in regard to putting your rhythmic legend of Shottesbrook into the article, so I'm stopped for the present.

Patterson and I ate hashed venison together at the Albion yesterday. I fancy your young friend called at the Press office, but he didn't leave his name.

Always yours,

MORTIMER COLLINS.

Saturday.

MY DEAR WALLER,—I hope our little lunch did not spoil your dinner at the Garrick: for my own part, I played a frightful knife and fork when I got home. I sent the charming "Beatrix" on to Froude, from whom I ought to get a reply by the time you are here on Wednesday. A note from Edmund Yates reached me this morning, accepting my proposal of a Berkshire article, so let us have your Shottesbrook ballad.

I am just going to write to Adams about the Magazine scheme.

Patterson is the most judicious and cautious of buffers. No doubt he and D'Arcy are right about our soon having a Tory government—and *your* claims would be too great to be ignored.

Always yours,

MORTIMER COLLINS.

Knowl Hill,

Sunday Evening.

DEAR WALLER,—To perceive your autograph
Was better than on Latin turf to quaff
Severe Falernian, and to read your song
Critical, lyrical, a trifle wrong
In over-generosity, was sweeter
Than anything in old Anacreon's metre—
Simplest of ancients, lord of the complete art
Of what concerns the wineglass and one's sweetheart.
Still with chagrin I feel inclined to ask
Why your critique is better than my Masque.
However, I forgive you. Cretan seas,
Half-century-sleeping Epimenides,

Iphis the fair, who should have worn the petti-Coat, and in trousers looked a deal too pretty,
 Made up a queer poetic hash. You deign
 To like it. Minor critics I disdain.

Seriously and prosaically, my dear Waller, I was naturally delighted with your generous appreciation. I am heartily sorry to hear you are in imperfect health, and doubtful spirits: come over and see me, and let me try to cheer you up.

Berks looks pleasant now with golden seas of ripe wheat waving on the hill-sides by Medmenham (I was there to-day)—and the beer is in fine condition.

Didn't I blaspheme at the printers! I had corrected a proof with extreme care, and it evidently did not go near the office. I shall certainly do myself the pleasure of calling on your wife when I'm next in town. I don't know when that will be though: for I have been there a great deal more than I like lately, and have just set down to quiet home work at the Session's close.

Always yours,

MORTIMER COLLINS.

In September, 1866, Mortimer Collins wrote the following birthday letter to his little daughter:—

MY DARLING MAB,—The eternal want of pence
 That vexes poets like a pestilence—
 Me at this moment cruelly condemns
 To offer you no gift of gold or gems;
 So if with carelessness your young eye looks
 Upon a couple of two well-known books,

Why, I'll forgive you. One is Horace, done
 Into good English verse by Conington—
 Horace, who by a half-prophetic ken,
 Wrote verse that suits our country gentlemen;
 Him in the Latin never will you read—
 Try him in English. And the next indeed
 Tho' in his brain is some Horatian stuff,
 For a Horace has not quite backbone enough:
 My dear friend Locker. Poet true is he.

* * * * *

There are several of Mortimer's friends who have not preserved his letters, or have been unable to find them.

There was a pleasant correspondence with the Hon. Grantley F. Berkeley, extending over a dozen years. The two friends had so many sympathies in common.

Mr. J. Deffet Francis was an old friend of Mortimer Collins.

There was a correspondence on matters social and political between Mortimer Collins and Lord Sussex Lennox from 1868 till the death of the latter.

Edmund Yates, an old friend, writes:—

March 17, 1877.

MY DEAR MRS. COLLINS,—I am very sorry I have none of Mortimer's letters to send you. I received a good number during our fifteen years' intercourse, but

they were all destroyed as soon as they had been answered. That intercourse was, I think I may say, mutually pleasant. It commenced in the autumn of 1860, when *Temple Bar* was about to start in my sub-editorial charge.

I wrote to Mortimer, begging him to contribute, and received a ready acquiescence. One of the most charming of his lyrics "Under the Cliffs by the Sea," appeared in the first number. He called upon me shortly after, and we commenced a pleasant acquaintance, which only terminated with his death. There was scarcely a number of *Temple Bar* without some musical song of his in its pages. He also wrote from time to time an account of his pedestrian excursion, through the different counties of England, which would well bear re-publication. He was with me also in *Tinsley's Magazine*, and was one of the first of those literary colleagues to whom, on starting the *World*, I looked for support and co-operation. In its pages some of his very best work appeared; the light bright atmosphere seemed to suit him, he had full play for his irony and his scorn, and his lilting voice was never more musically melodious.

He was so full of hearty, wholesome life, that I cannot even now reconcile myself to the fact that he is dead; and last autumn, when I used to ride past your cottage at Knowl Hill, it required but very small effort of imagination to see him, as I had seen him so frequently during the two preceding summers, in his straw hat and brown velvet coat, lounging over the gate, and laughingly discussing the news of the day,

or tempting me to dismount, to "look at a book," to "taste a tap," or some other excuse for pleasant hospitality.

In my case it is using no idle words to say that as a friend I miss him sorely, and as a contributor his place has never been supplied.

I am, my dear Mrs. Collins,

Very sincerely yours,

EDMUND YATES.

During the last eight years of Mortimer Collins's life, much of his correspondence was carried on by his wife, who acted as his secretary. To this Mr. Horne refers in the following letter:—

20th March, 1877.

MY DEAR MRS. COLLINS,—I have searched in vain for letters from Mortimer in his own handwriting. It seemed to me that I had a good many; but when they were found— I cannot commit the sacrilege of saying the voice was the voice of Jacob, but the hand was the hand of Esau! for rather would I say the words were the words of Quinbus Flestrin, but the fair hand was that of Mrs. Lemuel Gulliver.

Don't you remember I so often called him, as if gravely though in familiar discourse, by that high name? With what a kindly smile he replied to it as if he had been so christened.

And yet my impressions about him often varied, in consequence of his classical proclivities; and when I saw that great figure sometimes beneath the green

boughs, a little way off, with a sort of weighty grace, I could, with very little effort of imagination, have fancied him one of the Homeric heroes, who had just put off his armour, and was thinking of his oxen at the plough, or his golden corn-fields.

What genial kindness he had—what “large discourse”—and what equally large, unconscious, easy hospitality! He not only made his friend and visitor “at home” in his house, but he often gave him the impression that he, the host, was on a visit to his guest.

Another rare and excellent quality impresses my pleasant and unchequered memory of Mortimer Collins, and that is, he had no ill moods, no perverse or otherwise unsocial states of mind; he was always the same responsive, ready-witted, well-speaking, or well-listening companion.

The only thing I treasure up against Mortimer—or rather the thing treasures itself up in me with an odd mixture of provocation and fun—is the indisposition he had to let a fellow do any work while on a visit with him. Don't you remember how he used to follow me from one place to another to prevent my writing? and after promising he would not speak to me, or come to me, he went into the garden, and after passing and re-passing the window where I was at work, eventually came to a stand right in front, with an owl on his shoulder, and pretending to an equal gravity and profundity of thought?

And can these things be no more? I cannot bear to think of it, and will throw down my pen.

I am, my dear Mrs. Collins,

Yours truly, R. H. HORNE.

Mr. Oswald Crawford, Consul at Oporto, writes,—

I have very few of Mortimer Collins's letters here, the others are in England.

I don't think any of them would do for publication, all containing private matter which, if made public, would wound private feelings.

All are redolent of his kindly, genial nature; and all, like everything he ever said or wrote, full of that spontaneity of genius which was so characteristic of him.

There is a friend with whom Mortimer corresponded for fourteen years who cannot yet publish his letters.

This friend was to Mortimer an ideal man, a man whom he had admired and respected and loved above all other men.

I have often heard Mortimer say that he was the only man whose strength of grasp was equal to his own.

I believe the commencement of the friendship was in this way. In 1862 was published a translation of Virgil's first and second Georgics, "by a Market Gardener." Mortimer, delighted with the translation, said in reviewing it that if the Market Gardener's produce was as good as his translation it must be very fine indeed.

Soon after this Mortimer received a present of the most perfectly grown fruit, the gardener thereby proving that his fruit was equal to his scholarship, and his kindness of heart equal to both.

As none of the letters to this friend can be published, it will be impossible to give the impression of how completely he was mixed up with the life at the Cottage at Knowl Hill. His name was a household word with M. C. and his secretary. Every line that he wrote was treasured up, and every book that he published was eagerly read.

This friend whom Mortimer loved and admired above all other men was Mr. R. D. Blackmore, the novelist.

CHAPTER IV.

LIFE AT KNOWL HILL.

THE history of a man of any note is interesting because it is likely to include remarks and gossip about many other well-known people. Amongst the friends of Mortimer Collins there are but few names familiar to the public, and those names belong to men who have no wish to thrust themselves forward. This book will therefore give little satisfaction to lovers of gossip about celebrities.

Mortimer Collins's friends were chiefly a few private people, his dogs, his servants, and his wife.

Little trouble has been taken to collect his letters, as copies of his letters in verse were taken by his secretary.

It may fairly be said that he wrote more often in verse than in prose, that is, when he

was writing a mere friendly letter. He seemed always to be overflowing with poetry, and his song was as natural as a bird's. He took no pains in writing, so that a want of polish is often observed. Neither did he take pains to preserve anything that he had written, because, as he often remarked, there was "plenty more where that came from." He was not ambitious for fame, only so far as it would be useful in making a living; and he often said that if he had sufficient property to live upon, he would never allow a line of his to be published during his lifetime.

When he had written a letter in verse he generally showed it to his secretary, as she was the critic whose opinion he most valued, and she, if there were time before post, copied it, so that she has a large collection of these letters in verse. They were thrown off in a few minutes, just as a prose letter would be. The grave and serious man will throw this book aside contemptuously, and call the verses mere doggrel. And perhaps they are mere doggrel, though as pretty doggrel as ever was written.

Some little description of the cottage and household at Knowl Hill should be given, that

the allusions in the letters may be understood.

The cottage was very picturesque; a house of two stories, standing in an acre of ground, completely surrounded by trees, so that in summer time the road could not be seen. The garden was more ornamental than useful. There was a large lawn, bounded on one side by a row of tall lime-trees. Dotted about the lawn were pretty trees and shrubs which had been set from time to time by Mortimer Collins or his wife. A prettier spot in so small a space can scarcely be imagined.

Perhaps a few quotations from Mortimer Collins's works may be allowed, that we may have the description in his own words.

Some thirty miles from Megalopolis,
Miles also from the shrieking, grinding rail,
On a high road where once the four-horse mail
Flash'd gaily past—so placed my cottage is :
Roars merrily now the wind tall limes between,
Which guard my quiet lawn a triangle scalene.

And you may see me, if you pass this way,
Lean on my gate and look into the road,
And listen to the skylark's joyous ode—
Thoughtful, not oft cigarless. Will you say,

Who wears that velvet coat, a trifle tatter'd
That curious cool straw hat which wind and rain
have batter'd ?

Sometimes there comes a friendly visitant,
Brimm'd with the life o' the town, rewarding me
Well for my mutton and my Burgundy ;
And so we laugh together at fraud and cant,
While everywhere is heard a flutter of wings,
And winter's chorister, the unwearying redbreast,
sings.

O, but one visitant the nightingale !
Throb, throb, wild voice, through passionate twilight hours !
Love is thy gift from the Eternal Powers ;
Yet in thy song there seems a tragic wail,
Because in Argos, ages long ago,
A poet turn'd thy lyric wooing into woe.

Truly the poet is omnipotent :
His magic alters melody of birds,
Puts life, love, glory, into dead cold words,
Conjures all angels 'neath the grey sky's tent,
Bathes common things in light Hesperian. Thus
My garden I prefer to yours, Alcinoüs.

The following lines on a thrush that sang in the " tall limes," will give an idea of how much enjoyment Mortimer Collins found in the song of birds. There was a cherry-tree in the garden

which the birds regularly stripped, and he delighted in seeing them do it.

All through the sultry hours of June,
From morning blithe to golden noon,
And till the star of evening climbs
The grey-blue East, a world too soon,
There sings a Thrush amid the limes.

God's poet, hid in foliage green,
Sings endless songs, himself unseen ;
Right seldom come his silent times.
Linger, ye summer hours serene !
Sing on, dear Thrush, amid the limes !

Nor from these confines wander out,
Where with old gun bucolic lout
Commits all day his murderous crimes :
Though cherries ripe are sweet, no doubt,
Sweeter thy song amid the limes.

May I not dream God sends thee there,
Thou mellow angel of the air,
Even to rebuke my earthlier rhymes
With music's soul, all praise and prayer ?
Is that thy lesson in the limes ?

Closer to God art thou than I :
His minstrel thou, whose brown wings fly
Through silent æther's sunnier climes.
Ah, never may thy music die !
Sing on, dear Thrush, amid the limes !

The cottage, which was altered to suit Mortimer Collins's requirements, after he settled there in 1868, had a long low room, with bay windows looking on to the lawn, which was called the book-room. In each of these bay windows was a desk where sat respectively Mortimer Collins and his secretary. From this point of view he could watch the movements of his favourite birds while he was writing. Perhaps he would be in the middle of some grave political article or some trenchant satirical verse, when he would remark to his secretary that "Mrs. Blackbird was very busy looking for worms, so must have hatched her eggs." Mrs. Blackbird was a favourite that had built in our garden for several years, often bringing up two broods in one season. Perhaps she is building there now, and wondering what has become of her big gentle friend whom she used to allow to stroke her whilst she was sitting. Next to the book-room was another long room, used as a dining-room—a room which has rung over and over again with the sound of pleasant wit and merry laughter, for those who knew Mortimer Collins know well how merrily a meal with him passed.

From the dining-room opened a greenhouse which was the secretary's pride and delight when her secretaryship was not too onerous. Above the dining-room was a long room called the Master's bedroom. He was generally spoken of in the house as "the Master," both by servants and visitors. In this room "the Master" sat every night writing till about two o'clock, while his secretary, who was not so industrious, slept.

Often after he had finished his work would he write a few lines in verse for recreation, as he would say, after the hard work of prose. In this way were written the verses called "Sonnets at Midnight," which were published in the volume, "The Inn of Strange Meetings, and other Poems" [King and Co., 1871]. One was to his beautiful big dog who used to sleep in his room, and commences,—

A mighty Pyrenean wolf-hound lies
Beside me while I work, or think, or dream.

The other is to his sleepy secretary,—

Strange: I sit here, and write my painful prose,
And my sweet love is in the Land of Dreams.

In the morning the secretary would find the night's work placed by her bed for inspection

and criticism, and sometimes a lyric addressed to her.

It is said that when Molière had written a new play he always read it first to his housekeeper, and if it did not make her laugh, he burnt it, as he considered she represented the public.

The secretary was proud that her criticism should be valued by so clever a man as Mortimer Collins, but she always reminded him that she was but as Molière's housekeeper, and, having only ordinary intellect, could come nearer to the understanding of the general public than he himself could.

There were various small bedrooms in the house, sometimes filled with pleasant visitors, who complained that the only thing they could not get at Knowl Hill was sleep.

For the last eight years he seldom left the cottage except for daily walks. Therefore the visits of friends were his great pleasure and chief recreation. He would keep them up till about two or three o'clock with brilliant talk, and at eight the next morning he would be in their rooms, playing all manner of boyish tricks, stealing their clothes, pelting them with flowers

which he had gathered fresh from the garden, and when he was feeding the pigeons in the early morning he would throw handfuls of peas up at the windows of the bedrooms, while the poor occupants would be groaning for sleep. Although he generally worked till about two o'clock, he was fresh and bright and happy in the morning. He used to turn out about eight in his dressing-gown, and feed his pigeons and look for the postman, and have a cup of tea brought upstairs, to take while he read his letters and papers. At about half-past nine he would be dressed for the day, and would wander about with his dogs and secretary, making memoranda for work, or watching the birds, or looking after the growth of his trees, or looking about in the village, or doing all these things by turns till eleven, when he took his first meal, which he called "prandium." After that he would still wander or lounge amongst his books till half-past twelve, when the *Times* arrived. He would then settle down to the business of the day, and write till nearly seven, making an interval for a walk sometimes. At seven he dined, and at ten he went upstairs, carrying his basket of work for the night.

This life was continued regularly for eight years, and was broken only by the arrival of visitors, when he gave up his night-work, unless he were very busy. It was during this period that nearly all his published works were written.

His novels are not works of art as novels, but they are full of pretty and poetical and original ideas. These ideas might have been more in place in some other form than a novel, but M. C. wrote at a time when almost every other form of book literature was at a discount, and money was a consideration to him. It is just possible that some of the lyrics carelessly scattered in those novels may live after the novels of the present day are forgotten.

Before closing this chapter I should like to quote what various people have written concerning the life at Knowl Hill. The spirit of poesy was catching, and visitors to the cottage would often send verses to the poet describing their impressions of the visit. Mr. Campkin, the Librarian to the Reform Club, wrote the following verses in December, 1871. They so accurately describe Mortimer Collins in his home that they are worth quoting entirely.

TO ALL TO WHOM THESE PRESENTS SHALL COME.

Come book yourselves, comrades, for Twyford ! and
 thence by a short half-hour's drive,
 Or an hour's brisk "pedal progression," along the
 high road, you arrive
 At Knowl Hill, where's the snuggest of snuggeries—
 Mortimer Collins's Hive !

Knowl Hill is Mount Hybla in Berkshire : the earliest
 of bees thither come ;
 Coy doves woo and coo there ; and even the birds of
 Minerva there chum ;
 While clematis silvers the porch o'er of Mortimer
 Collins's Home !

"An author one hates that's *all* author:" no stiff
 foolscap tucker or bib
 Wears *he*, though the pages are legion we owe to his
 lightning-tipp'd nib ;
 But with authorcraft ne'er are you baited at Mortimer
 Collins's Crib !

He loves his vocation, albeit no slim sallow suitor to
 Fame ;—
 Discards not his lamp, yet no bondslave is he to the
 nocturnal flame :
 And though brain crowns the structure there's muscle
 in Mortimer Collins's frame !

Broad-chested, big-handed, large-hearted, he could, if
 he would, carry grist
 'Gainst the Miller's own man up a ladder :—and woe !
 howe'er sinewy his wrist,
 To the churl who should earn a "refresher" from
 Mortimer Collins's fist !

O'er Horace's Farm and Falernian, Old Time hath long
woven a charm ;
But Horace's wine flow'd not freer, nor was Horace's
welcome more warm
Than the wine and the welcome that greet you at
Mortimer Collins's Farm !

Were his Sabine retreat ne'er so pleasant, no wife
there cheer'd Horace's lot :—
But the wife at Knowl Hill, boys ! would hallow the
bleakest and barrenest spot—
Holds a patent for making folks happy at Mortimer
Collins's Cot !

How light maketh she of her labours ! flings fussy
formalities o'er,
Discerns all your wants and forestalls them, is rich in
true courtesy's lore.—
Care's shackles drop off at the threshold of Mortimer
Collins's door !

Then away to Knowl Hill ! 'tis by "long chalks" the
coziest nook in the land :
Good humour, good cheer there abound : not Misan-
thropy's self could withstand
The heart-winning ways of that Lady—(she wields an
Enchantress's wand !—)
Or the grip—'tis a grip to remember—of Mortimer
Collins's Hand !

Mr. Littleton Hay, in writing of Knowl Hill,
says,—

There a Poet will give you a greeting,
 Quite free from conventional chill ;
 'Tis a *Friend* whose strong grip you are meeting,
 On the lawn at Knowl Hill.

'Tis a spot on the earth most delicious—
 Calm rest from the stern London mill ;
 Neither joys nor delights meretricious
 Are found at Knowl Hill.

May the Poet and Lady live long time—
 Enjoy of the world a fair fill !
 'Tis an ever delightful sweet song-time,
 Their life at Knowl Hill.

Mrs. Townshend Mayer, after visiting the cottage, wrote a pretty little poem called "Knowl Hill in Outline," of which I quote a few verses :

Take turf rich as emerald, trees of each shade,
 From the dark stately fir to the oak's tender green,
 Let sweet-scented hay from a neighbouring glade
 Blend with roses and woodbine to perfume the scene.

* * * * *

Take a host—a more eloquent pencil than mine,
 A fancy more subtle, more glowing, more strong,
 Are wanted a host such as this to enshrine
 In verse worthy to sing such a master of song.

* * * * *

Take mornings of open air healthy delight—
Take evenings when poetry holds you at will—
Combine all life offers most genial and bright,
And form Poet's Cottage, at lovely Knowl Hill.

Many more such little trifles were written by various friends, and I am reminded by this to mention that all such verses, and also many of those written to friends, were placed in a large book lettered at the back, "Knowl Hill Rhymes," a book which gave a great deal of pleasure to the visitors to the cottage. When friends were with us the evening was often spent in writing nonsense rhymes for the book, each person being expected to do his or her part. Many merry evenings were passed in the manufacture of the "Knowl Hill Rhymes," as they were called, some of which I shall have occasion to quote.

A very intimate friend of Mortimer Collins's wrote to remind me of points in his character, in case I should forget them. I may as well quote from the letter, which says,—

Don't forget to write of Mortimer's power with the English language and his insight into it, seeing the meaning and poetry of sound in every letter. I know his remarks about it have revealed to me beauty and meaning in the form and sound of words which I should never otherwise have recognized. Then don't

forget to notice his ease in handwriting, and how he could bear interruptions without being the least put out, but rather refreshed by them. And do show what an out-and-out Englishman he was. But above all show how he, and he alone, realized to one the advance that Christianity brought into the world and thus superseded all other religious or intellectual systems, by its key-note being that of *Love*. He fulfilled the law of Christ in this, because with him it was not only special love to special people, though he had that also, but he liked to live in an atmosphere of love. He made everybody who came near him to feel this.

The same writer says in another place,—

He made love to grow in every one. He created it from his own store. You could feel his large-hearted tenderness in the grip of his hand, and in everything. I have seen him stop in the middle of his writing to stroke a tortoise that was on the table, and the torpid animal seemed to know him and love him, and put out his head to be stroked. And don't forget to mention how he used to sit out on the lawn in summer writing, and with what high-bred courtesy and geniality he would welcome any one who came in at the gate.

CHAPTER V.

1868 TO 1871.

WHAT Mortimer Collins's life was during the next eight years I will endeavour to show in his own words as much as possible. He has often been blamed for speaking so much of himself in his books and writings. Those who knew him will quite understand that he did not do this from conceit, but from a desire to be friendly with his readers. He had not a grain of conceit concerning his mental powers, but he seemed to be proud of his physical strength. The absence of conceit in him is well shown by his great appreciation of power in others. He was a most appreciative man. Though he excelled in *vers de société*, it did not hinder him from admiring other verse writers; and he would take down a volume of Locker's or Praed's and read aloud some of his favourite

pieces with delight, pointing out as he went along some happy phrase or turn. The loving way in which he handled a book was in itself a picture.

Anything of interest that Mortimer Collins has written concerning his life and character I will quote, so that we may have his own words. His observations on birds and flowers and trees are always worth reading. "Dear Gilbert White," as he called him, always lay on his desk for reference. In a letter, under the heading of "Adversaria," and signed "Cæcilius," which he wrote for many years in the *Press and St. James's Chronicle*, he used to make frequent mention of his garden and the birds and his beloved trees.

The dogs were so completely a part of the life at Knowl Hill, and are so often mentioned in Mortimer Collins's writings, that some mention should be made of them. M. C. described them in the *Graphic* in the following manner:—

One is a mighty wolf-hound of the Pyrenees, a most courteous and chivalrous dog, who, when he walks out with ladies, treats them as if he were *preux chevalier*. He rather likes a fight; has thrashed all the dogs within a few miles; and sighs, like Alexander, for more

worlds to conquer. Often have we been asked why we don't send him to a dog-show, as if any dog of ours should be tied up or caged for an hour, or should be subjected to the impertinent gaze of myriad visitors. Dogs have their feelings; they hate being looked at by a lot of people they don't know. They are far more sagacious and sensitive than is generally supposed; and we could no more send a dog of ours to a show than we could submit to be exhibited in a man-show ourselves.

The second of our canine comrades is a little Scotch terrier called Growl, and so christened because his first intelligent act in life was to growl at his mother. She, Lady by name, was the most energetic dog we ever remember; she would take a header into a bucket of water, and pick up a halfpenny at the bottom of it. Her son has much of her spirit; if we take him on the Thames he often jumps overboard to attack the swans, and he is quite willing to fight any dog, however huge. The great wolf-hound has given him several shakings, and once he was resuscitated only by a copious exhibition of port wine: but he still growls at him whenever he comes too near. Like the English at Waterloo, he does not know when he is beaten.

Dog number three is a blue Skye, thoroughbred, given to us a few years ago because his jealous temper caused him to bite the legs of a baby newly arrived in his master's house. His master, though the editor of a great review, could not tolerate cynical criticism of that sort. So Fido came home to us, and a pleasant little fellow he is. Always in extremes, he is either barking with exuberant joy, or looking at you

with great melancholy brown eyes, that seem as if they belonged to an imprisoned spirit. He never seems to sleep. We often write into the short hours. When we raise our eyes there are Fido's invariably watching us. It has been said of some dogs that they can do everything but talk. Fido does *talk*. We know what he means as well as possible. He has particular expressions for everything that he wants.

Dogs are the best of friends. They love you just as well in a shabby coat as in a smart one. They are glad of a good walk and grateful for a good dinner. Ours at this moment are enjoying a dog-sleep in various corners; but when this article is done, and we get up for a stroll to the Thames, they will all be ready, barking eagerly and full of energy. And the great wolf-hound, the moment he sees the imperial stream, will spring into it with a mighty header, crushing the white water-lilies, and will swim across to the ait, in order to pursue his favourite amusement of turning out the moor-fowl. A magnificent appetite will he have for his oatmeal porridge at eight.

Fido was given to Mortimer Collins in 1866 by Dr. Allon, editor of the *British Quarterly*. The Pyrenean wolf-hound came to us in 1869. He was found in a ditch in a state of exhaustion by a poor half-witted man, who was taking him about to the various houses in the neighbourhood to ask if he belonged there. Mortimer

Collins saw him pass the gate, and feeling sorry to see the dog in such a condition, inquired what was the matter. He learnt all that the man had to tell, and then offered to give the animal a home till its owner could be found. The dog was carefully nursed, and soon turned out to be as fine a fellow as ever Landseer could wish to paint, and no one put in a claim for him. Not knowing his name, we used to speak of him as “the big dog,” and he soon learnt that we referred to him when we did so; therefore we named him “Big Dog,” and he became our great friend. He was curiously like his master in character. He had mighty strength, and yet such gentle, loving ways. It was pleasant to see the big man and the big dog romping on the lawn together. One day, when they were out walking, a Berkshire labourer, sitting under a hedge carving his bread and cheese with a clasp-knife, remarked, “You be a pair, you be!”

Mortimer Collins used always to tell his friends that he looked upon “Big Dog” as a gift from Providence—I ought rather to say God, as he very much objected to the term “Providence” as applied to the Creator; he said it sounded too much like a committee of management.

The first letter I have of Mortimer Collins's, after he had settled down at Knowl Hill, is the following to Dr. Steele, in Liverpool, written in October, 1868 :—

DEAR STEELE,—I thank your ready pen
 For gossip fresh and fluent,
 How happy is the scribbler when
 He's indolent and truant !
 I'm burning quarts of midnight oil,
 An awful novel planning,
 While you have bid adieu to toil
 In the classic street of Canning.

II.

This crib is not the Broceliande
 Where Merlin paid his ransom,
 Egad, 'tis better than the Strand,
 Plough'd by the headlong hansom.
 And when you leave great Liverpool
 By Mersey's *ingens unda*,
 Bring some cigars, the notion's cool,
 And spend the promised Sunday.

III.

Jack Ormsby flies to Hannay's arms,
 From Spain's unreasoning rebel,
 A central fire the birds alarms
 In Essex borne by Kebbel—

James Hutton reigns in Catherine Street ;
Steele treads the place of Canning :
And I where limes and elm-trees meet,
An awful tale am planning.

M. C.

Knowl Hill, Berks.

James Hannay was at this time Consul at Barcelona. He had been the centre of a set of literary men who are said to have been brilliant talkers. Amongst those who gathered round him were John Ormsby, T. E. Keibel, James Hutton, Dr. Steele, and Mortimer Collins.

“The Ivory Gate,” two vols. [Hurst and Blackett], was published early in 1869. Like all Mortimer Collins’s novels, it contains many personal sketches. The taste displayed in introducing such sketches in a novel has been much questioned by critics. If he was guilty in this respect, he does not stand alone.

The book is dedicated to Lord Sussex Lennox, who was a kind friend and warm admirer of the author.

In June, 1869, Mortimer Collins wrote as follows:—

The other day, walking along a solitary rural lane, I met a fellow with a truck-load of tortoises. They were a shilling each, so I bought one. The man assured me

that tortoises had a tremendous appetite for snails and slugs, and that I had only to turn the reptile he sold me loose on my lawn in order to see his destructive power. I have turned him loose on the lawn. He basks in the sunshine, when there is any : when there isn't he draws his head into his tortoise-shell den, and sleeps serenely. As to eating snails, it is simply a myth. I put a snail in front of him : the creature, void of fear, walks over his head, and proceeds to transact its own business. However, a tortoise is an amusing animal to watch : its laziness is perfection.

The next is a letter to Dr. Waller :—

Knowl Hill, Berks, July 23, 1869

POETA CARISSIME,—To see the shore of Teignmouth in Fleet Street is curious, is it not ? Do you know, I lost Shore's memorandum yesterday, and am in doubt whether I rightly remember his address. . Come and see me, I implore. There's a delicious rain freshening my lawn to-day, everything will be divinely fragrant after it. Come ! My wife, who has heard much of you, but never seen you, joins in the entreaty. We can give you a bed. When shall it be ?

I send you an eccentric *libellus* of mine.

à c

MORTIMER COLLINS.

The *libellus* was a "Letter to the Right Honourable Benjamin Disraeli," written in verse, and published by John Camden Hotten.

In the next Mortimer Collins records a visit

he, with his secretary, had paid to the Hon. Grantley F. Berkeley in November, 1869.

I have just been staying where, upon a lawn bitten close by wild rabbits, shielded from a high road only by laurel, and rhododendron, and holly, about a hundred pheasants come twice daily to feed, and cluster around their master as he scatters the grain. Near that lawn no gun is ever fired, though I suspect that even while I write the breech-loaders are busy in adjacent coverts. The birds know they are safe on that island of emerald, and do not start, though the shots are quick and fast in the vicinage. I saw twenty partridges come to be fed at three o'clock with a punctuality not to be surpassed by the wearer of a Dent chronometer. "*Magister artis . . . venter,*" says Persius—the art of accurate time-keeping is ventric. As to the wild-fowl—among them many rare and shy species, their knowledge of their master, their tame confidence, was most admirable. Theirs was a pond sacred from shot, but all down the valley I saw a long line of decoys for their brethren.

The confidence of these wild creatures in their human friend was a sight well worth seeing. I don't mention his name; it would be a breach of his confidence in me, and, besides, every one who knows anybody will at once know him.

In April, 1870, Mortimer Collins made the following observations on birds:—

The cuckoo and nightingale have been heard for some time in the warmest parts of England. I have not heard

either, but younger folk with better ears than mine assured me that the former has been canorous in my immediate neighbourhood.

There are few things so striking, notwithstanding its familiarity, as the way in which natural phenomena recur, without any failure. As Emerson writes:—

“ Ah! well I mind the calendar,
 Faithful through a thousand years
 Of the painted race of flowers
 Exact to days, exact to hours,
 Counted on the spacious dial
 Yon broider'd zodiac girds.
 I know the pretty almanac
 Of the punctual coming back,
 On their due days, of the birds.”

Yes, here we have them back to their time, though they may have wintered in Ægean islands or on the margin of Nile. So with the flowers. The punctual primrose brightens all the banks. The vernal world is full of song and fragrance; the exile from England may well exclaim with the poet,—

*O qui mea me distat in Anglia
 Qua nunc Aprilis floret amabilis!*

Even while I write I hear the quaint queak, queak, queak of the wry-neck, *Yunx torquilla*—known as the snake-bird from its violent hissing when any one approaches its nest; known, also, as the cuckoo's mate, because it usually arrives a little before the cuckoo. It is a carpenter, this little migratory creature, and

builds its nest in some hollow tree—coming back year after year to the very same tree, if undisturbed. Some birds are masons, like the swallows; some miners, like the jackdaws and kingfishers; some basket-makers, like jays, and thrushes, and bullfinches; some parasites, who won't trouble themselves to make nests of their own if they can help it, as the cuckoo, and many of the hawks and owls. But their habits often vary: thus the robin-redbreast usually chooses a cavity in a bank or tree-root; but I know of a pair who at this moment are contentedly sitting in an old basket that hangs in my outhouse.

The following verses were written early in 1870 to Mr. Fred. Locker, to thank him for some earrings brought from Naples for Mortimer Collins's daughter. The pattern of the earrings was copied from those on a head of Proserpine.

Δημήτηρ . . Γῆ-Μήτηρ . . the goddess
 Earth Mother I chiefly adore:
 Green turf of the mountains her bodice,
 Her lace-fringe the foam of the shore.
 As I lie in cool depths of her foliage
 She teaches mysterious lore
 Which the folk of this harsh and unholy age
 Would say was a bore.

I'm a Pagan, you say: and I know it.
 Olympus exists as before:
 Demeter has chosen a poet
 To bring a fair gift from her store.

A gift from soft Sicily's water—
 Rare earrings, perfected of yore,
 To my daughter she sends, which her daughter
 Persephone wore.

M. C.

The next letter to Mr. Campkin, Librarian of the Reform Club, was probably written early in 1870. Mr. Campkin had written a pamphlet on Grub Street.

Knowl Hill, Berks.

DEAR CAMPKIN,—In your swell Reform
 Club, where they try to raise a storm,
 A Club wherein there's one good thing—
 Most unmistakeable gin sling—
 A pleasant drink 'mid projects dark,
 When Beales is marching on the Park,
 And all the roughs who live near Epping
 Toward the voluptuous West are stepping
 . . . Confound it, I have lost my sentence—
 Forgive me and receive repentance.
 I meant to say your rhymelets smell
 More of the country than Pall Mall;
 They're breezy like the Berkshire hills,
 And scented like spring daffodils;
 They're jolly as a quart of ale,
 And sweet as song of nightingale.

Am I, an old Bohemian scamp, kin
 To th' archæologic poet Campkin?

And is it possible that he,
 Being no Bohemian, likes Bohea ?
 Or would he with the brewhouse tubs treat
 The thirsty denizens of Grub Street
 —That grimy street, Parnassus portal,
 Which Campkin's essay makes immortal—
 That street where, when 'twas wretched weather,
 Curll's hapless authors slept together ?

Confound bohea and beer ! and come
 When in the gorse the brisk bees hum,
 When spring is coming up this way
 (Coleridge) and hyacinth beds are gay,
 And see if than Pall Mall 'tis harder
 To forage a poor poet's larder,
 And try if you, Reform Club dweller,
 Can tolerate a poet's cellar.

M. C.

In the summer of 1870 was published "The Vivian Romance," 3 vols. [Hurst and Blackett]. It is dedicated to "Richard Doddridge Blackmore, Poet and Gardener," the man whom Mortimer Collins admired above all others.

The next letter is to Dr. Waller.

Knowl Hill, Berks,

27th June, 1870.

MY DEAR WALLER,—I noticed an announcement of certain "Revelations of Peter Brown"—*yours* of course. Can you let me have an early copy ? I can review it in the *Globe* and elsewhere.

How do you feel in Ireland just now? Don't all the disestablishments and disendowments make you dizzy? The wheel of politics runs so fast that you can't see the spokes. I pity the Ixion who is tied to it. I'm not, I prefer

Lis numquam, toga rara, mens quieta,
 Vires ingenuæ, salubre corpus,
 Prudens simplicitas, pares amici,
 Convictus facilis, sine arte mensa,
 Nox non ebria sed soluta curis,
 Non tristis torus, attamen pudicus,
 Somnus qui faciat breves tenebras.
 Which sort of sleep you may surmise,
 Right seldom visits Gladstone's eyes.

When are you coming to this island? We are building here, just enough to give a poet a bed.

Always yours,

MORTIMER COLLINS.

In September, 1870, he wrote the following in "Adversaria :"—

When I have leisure I like to look at a second-hand bookstall. The vendors of second-hand books are generally quaint characters. It is astonishing what odd things they know, from their habit of reading the oddest old books they can find in their long intervals of business. Once, a quarter of a century ago, in the ancient city of Bristol, I played a game of chess with one of these semi-literary worthies, and was easily beaten, though I thought myself formidable, and found

that he possessed a perfect library of recondite chess-books, none of which he would sell if he could help it.

The next I quote was written in November, 1870.

Being at Great Marlow the other day, I strolled a little way out of the town to see the house where Shelley lived. It is on the roadside, just opposite a comfortable-looking mansion called Remnantz—and is broken up into three cottages, whereof one (of course) is a public-house.

* * * * *

Sir William Clayton has had an inscription put up with an appropriate passage from the "Adonais"—but it seems a pity the place is not kept in somewhat better condition. However, if the pantheists and democrats who swear by Shelley leave his house to be degraded, I, who admire him only for his high poetic faculty, may be content.

The next letter is to Miss J. M., who had sent a hamper at Christmas, 1870, containing various things. The last verse refers to a pair of little vases in which were represented some boys running after pigeons.

DEAR JOSEPHINE,—We stick our thumbs
Into that famous jar of plums,

They'll soon be done.

That mighty sausage too we slice,
And wonder things can be so nice

At Islington.

Take Chemistry: Potassa's daughter
 Must fain catch fire on touching water.
 Take mathematic formula
 (Most difficult to rhyme you'll say),
 Add one, one fifth, one ninth, and so on—
 Subtract one third, one seventh, and go on
 For ever, and you'll find out thus.
 The ratio of the radius. . . .
 The law of spreading circles shown
 When in a pool you throw a stone,
 The law whose equal movement deals
 With targets, hoops, and carriage wheels,
 That forms the rainbow's arch sublime,
 And makes Louisa's watch keep time.

So mystery is everywhere,
 And broods in earth and dreams in air,
 And nobody can yet disclose
 How the green bud becomes the rose;
 The flower of beauty and delight,
 Whose fair form gladdens sense and sight.

You may be right: I may be wrong,
 I write this rhyme at Evensong.
 The villagers are long abed,
 And every pious prayer is said.
 I soon shall join the sleepy crew,
 (But first must write an hour or two,)
 And then shall dream that Mother Church,
 Wielding a formidable birch,
 In guise of Dame who long long since
 O'er A B C did make me wince,

Proves that a hapless poet's skin
 May be uncomfortably thin.

In January, 1871, Mortimer Collins wrote as follows concerning the birds in his garden :—

Whether or no the eclipse had anything to do with the cold, it certainly brought in keen weather. The birds feel it, and grow wondrous tame ; specially our audacious and vivacious little friend the robin red-breast :—

The summer bird

That ever in the haunch of winter sings.

There is a little fellow—a *sylvia rubecula*, bolder than its kin—that lives in my passages and staircases, and daintily picks up crumbs of bread and meat that are set on a plate for it, and thoroughly enjoys a bath in a shallow dish. I have found Mr. Lowe's ten-shilling gun-tax useful in keeping at a distance the lazy loungers who kill song birds this cold weather. A threat of the police has sufficed to render them shy of my shubberies, where congregate in peace black-birds and thrushes, whose songs will reward me well when summer shall return. By-the-way, the predatory people in my vicinage never talk of "the police ;" they drop the definite article, and seem to personify their natural enemy, whom they style Boleese—with tremendous emphasis on the Bo.

The following month he writes :—

February this year is forward ; the country is alive

with colour and beauty; the birds are busily building; thrush sings and brimstone butterfly flutters, and *pulex irritans* bites; and I'm writing on a sunny lawn, fringed with catkins of the filbert, whose tiny rose-flowers are so numerous that we may expect plenty of nuts with our autumnal port. "Now comes in the sweet o' the year."

In February, 1871, Mortimer Collins wrote the following valentine to his daughter, who was staying with Canon Cook at Smallbridge, and was engaged to be married to the Canon's eldest son, Keningale Cook:—

I mean to send a Valentine,
E'en tho' it seem ridiculous,
Unto a little maid of mine
Who's staying at Ponticulus.

Tho' flatterers sometimes say to me
Of verse I've the complete art,
I guess that she would rather see
Some verses from her sweetheart.

K. C.'s *poëta optimus*

I know you'll say . . . *ut debes* :
His Acme this Septimius
Finds in her ἀκμὴ ἡβης.

"Good morrow to my Valentine,"
In polyglot *fasciculus* :—
I hope that little maid of mine
Won't tire them at Ponticulus.

Mortimer Collins always wrote very strongly against Positivism. The following epigrammatic sentence written at this time is perhaps worth quoting:—

The Positivist's position is explicable without difficulty. He cannot believe in the Deity, because to him the Deity is inconceivable. There are others to whom it is impossible not to believe in the Deity, because they perceive His presence, although they make no pretence to comprehend Him. If you talk to a man who is colour-blind about Titian, or to one who is tune-deaf about Mozart, he cannot follow you. Lovers of painting and music are not likely to be convinced by this that the beauty which they see and hear has no existence.

The following letter was written to the Marquis de Vic in the spring of 1871:—

DEAR MARQUIS,—Meeting, you and I,
 By what mere fools would christen chance,
 I ask'd myself this question; Why
 Should not our England by-and-by
 Be friends with her sweet enemy France?

That phrase was Philip Sidney's. He,
 Before mere trading turn'd men sour,
 Was, as I verily think, what we,
 Though of two nations, fain would be . . .
 Preux Chevalier et Troubadour.

On your Garonne our Edward dwelt ;
 The langue d'oc our Richard spake :
 We the same impulses have felt,
 And to the self-same God have knelt
 True brothers for true manhood's sake.

MORTIMER COLLINS.

In May, 1871, Mortimer Collins wrote in "Adversaria" concerning a pair of owls which eventually became great favourites with him, and died only two or three months before himself.

OWLS.—The *Owl*, to which I in its prime was a contributor was, as everybody is aware, christened by inverting the initial letters of the name of that brilliant, but rather maniacal gentleman, L. W. Oliphant. The notion was suddenly started at a Crystal Palace dinner, where Evelyn Ashley and Algernon Borthwick, and a few other brilliant wits were present; and, as it won the patronage of Lady Palmerston, the thing went wondrously. How a few years changes the aspect of affairs! As I think of the old *Owl* days, I can hardly believe that Palmerston is gone, and that Cambridge House is a club.

And I am reminded of the *Owl* by the fact that my neighbour's footman has brought me a pair of young owls of his own training. They look preternaturally wise. Of course I have bought them, and of course I mean to educate them. Consulting Gilbert White, I find that owls are fond of young pigeons; now as I

prefer to eat my pigeonneaux (as the French call them) myself, this is serious. I must keep my new pets away from the pigeon-house. I am told by the same authority that owls hoot in three different keys, G flat or F sharp, B flat, and A flat; also, that they can live a whole year without water. I hope they won't wake up suddenly to-night, and hoot in any of the keys mentioned above. Such music would be rather too startling.

These owls became great pets, and an aviary was built for them round a tree-stump. Unfortunately they used to wake up suddenly, and hoot in all sorts of keys in the middle of the night; and owls from the neighbouring woods attracted by the sound, used to congregate in the garden, and join in the hooting.

We found that they liked plenty of fresh water, and used to enjoy a bath. It is generally supposed that owls do not like sunlight, but these were accustomed to bask in the sun and stretch out their wings to catch its rays, as if they enjoyed it.

In July he wrote as follows on gardening:—

Being a lover of gardens, and, indeed, usually writing in a garden—a habit which during this rainy summer, has often brought me into difficulty—I have been amused by an article in the current number of

London Society, entitled, "A Revolution in Gardening." The author, who founds his paper on a certain Mr. Robinson, concerning whom I unhappily am ignorant, is an advocate of wild gardening, and a most determined opponent of the system of "bedding out." He prefers dandelions to marigolds—wherein I cannot agree with him; but I grow the roots of leontodon, or *dent de lion* for salad, knowing them to be both pleasant to eat and salutary. My own opinion is that the horticulture whereof Paxton was the prophet, and whose principle is to multiply new plants to the utmost, by importation and combination, is the true art; at the same time I would by no means neglect indigenous plants. I go out into the by-ways and commons in search of ferns and orchises, crane's-bill and loosestrife, foxglove [i. e. folks'-glove or fairies'-glove], the yellow flags and white water-lilies of Thames, and a hundred other wild flowers. But this should not decrease the culture of exotic and erratic plants. I like to cover my walls with the swift-growing, milk-fragrant cobœa of Mexico, with the bright red taxonia, with the fragrant wistaria of China, with the orange eccremocarpus of Peru. I don't see why these should not be grown, as well as the bryony and nightshade, and clematis of the hedges. By the way, the writer I am criticizing puts a superfluous letter in the name of the village where Sophocles was born, but by way of reprisal spells the barbarous name of chryseis with four letters too few, escholzia instead of eschsoltzia. Why not always call the golden flower Chryseis, after that daughter of Apollo's priest, Καλλιπάρης, whose abduction gave the Greeks before Troy so much trouble?

Early in August Mortimer Collins's only child was married to Keningale Cook.

Mortimer Collins recorded the event in "Adversaria :"—

My annotations on things in general will, I fear, be brief to-day; and for this reason . . . that a little girl of my acquaintance will be passed on to a gentleman and poet, "With the author's compliments." How is a man to interest himself in trivial matters under such circumstances?

In December, 1871, he wrote thus of the birds in his garden :—

I confess to some slight envy for birds this wintry weather. My pigeons take their bath in the coldest-blooded way the moment the gardener breaks the ice of mornings. Mr. Keats writes :—

"St. Agnes' Eve—Ah, bitter chill it was!
The Owl, for all his feathers, was a cold."

Well, I don't believe it will be much colder on St. Agnes' Eve (I regret to say I don't know who the lady was, but I see January 21st is her Festival) than it has been already,—and a couple of owls that live in an apple-tree opposite my window blink at me as jollily as possible, and evidently care nothing at all for frost or snow.

An American poet, Emerson, is truer to nature when he describes the titmouse . . . most amusing and daring of little birds.

“ You shall not be over-bold
 When you deal with arctic cold,” . . .

he writes : and then tells us how, in the sharpest weather, he met in his wanderings a tom-tit that shamed his shivers,—

Flew near, with soft wing grazed my hand,
 Hopp'd on the bough, then, darting low,
 Prints his small impress on the snow,
 Shows feats of his gymnastic play,
 Head downward clinging to the spray.

“ Here was this atom in full breath
 Hurling defiance at vast death ;
 This scrap of valour just for play
 Fronts the north wind in waistcoat grey.”

Just such an atom on wings—such a versicolor scrap of valour—comes and hangs feet upward on a bit of gristle of sirloin which I suspended by a bit of twine from a young ash-tree, I see him a dozen times a day. Each time I think that to be a tom-tit would be pleasant.

And, indeed, the life of a bird is not unenviable ; and to be a dog and to fulfil the whole duty of a dog, to love man and to keep his commandments, might not be objectionable ; but I would rather not be a cat.

The following letter is to Lord Sussex Lennox, who was said to have appeared at a Fancy Ball as Friar Tuck in the winter of 1871:—

MY DEAR LORD SUSSEX,—I like to think
 Of you as good Friar Tuck . . .

Who wore the hood in merry Sherwood,
And preach'd to the outlaw multitude,
And kiss'd the girls, and cudgell'd the churls,
And shot full many a buck.

When the nights are gay in Brighton town,
As gay as the ladies love,
And the ball-room blaze outdoes the rays
Of the silent stars above,
Then I well can guess your Holiness
Hath all your heart's desire :
For the prettiest girl would offer her waist,
[And perhaps might offer her lips to taste],
To a tall and handsome Friar.

Friar Tuck was great at the quarter-staff,
A match for any three :
And on my word, I think, my Lord,
You're quite as good as he.
Your presence appals the Brighton roughs,
Who are fond of burly White :
Your wit puts down the Brighton muffs,
And you lead the Town aright.

If I've done no wrong in this wilful song
To your fun and force and fire,
Say a mass for me when you bend your knee,
Most venerable Friar.

MORTIMER COLLINS.

In 1871 the following letter was sent to Miss
L. C—— :—

MY DEAR MISS C——, The famous poet Milton,
 In verse above an irony has built on
 The unsolved problem of our life, and makes
 Fallen angels fall into absurd mistakes.
 Your arguments I will allow, but I
 Am still "a hog of Epicurus' sty."

Think ! even He who dwelt in Nazareth
 Enjoy'd the happy fields, the sea's cool breath,
 Chose stalwart fishermen to teach His creed,
 Even fallen women from their anguish freed,
 And, when to marriage festival He went,
 Turn'd water into wine most excellent.

His life was holy, happy, and heroic ;
 Epicurean He, as well as Stoic ;
 In Him met all extremes, if we accept
 The records by His fond disciples kept.

In you meet some extremes, I rather think,
 But will not set them down in pen and ink.

MORTIMER COLLINS.

During 1871 Mortimer Collins published three works. The first, a volume of verse, was called "The Inn of Strange Meetings and other Poems" [King and Co., Cornhill].

In this volume the first canto only of the Inn of Strange Meetings is given. The author intended to make it a long poem. The first canto is in the *ottava rima*. The second, which

is finished, but unpublished, is in the Spenserian stanza, and the third, which remains unfinished, is in the *terza rima*.

The third canto breaks off suddenly, with the following remark appended :—

“This, I presume, will be continued elsewhere when I get Canto II. published.”

It may not be amiss to quote a few lines of the unpublished cantos.

In the second the Poet, supposed to be in Hades, is addressing the earth : he says,—

Well wast thou call'd of Grecians Γῆ-Μήτις—
 A woman—therefore always in extremes.
 Thy pain is pleasure : and a shuddering tear
 Comes from the happy lover when he seems
 To have achieved the issue of his dreams—
 And sad at heart the poet when his name
 Is blazon'd everywhere, since well he deems
 That infamy has wider reach than fame,
 That Buonaparte than Byron burns with fiercer flame.

* * * * *

Thy life is death, O Earth, to many millions—
 Strong men, soft women, children very weak,
 For whom upon thy surface were pavilions
 Of gladness, if the folk could wisdom seek.
 I see thy cities foul, thy deserts bleak,
 Thy toiling serfs by whom no joy is won,

Thy noblest sons befool'd by scoundrels sleek.
Now shall my irresistible thought be done,
And thou be dash'd to atoms 'neath the setting sun.

From the third canto I quote the following :—

The man who a plodding career pursues,
Grubbing for money and nought beside,
Mad with himself if a chance he lose.

Only imagine him, having died,
Still slaving away at his ledgers up here,
With his hunger for gold unsatisfied.

Doom'd so to slave for a million year,
Starving his soul and his body, so
That the clink of a coin he may always hear.

The next work was a volume of Essays called the "Secret of Long Life" [King and Co., Cornhill], which was published anonymously in the earlier editions, but the author's name was given with the later ones.

Mortimer Collins shows us his character in this more than in any other of his works.

He wrote on this occasion from love of the subject, and not for money.

The book is full of pretty thoughts, and has, I believe, given much pleasure to many people.

The chapter on the "marriage of completion" is said to be especially fine.

In attempting to make Mortimer Collins speak for himself and show his own character, I quote various sentences from his works, but in this case it is difficult to quote, as the author speaks for himself all through the book.

The other work published in this year was "Marquis and Merchant," 3 vols. [Hurst and Blackett].

Many of his readers think this was his best novel, but it was not the author's favourite. I will quote a few sentences where the writer talks to the reader, and shows his own character. Speaking of the education of young men, he says,—

Homer is a fine writer ; Horace is useful for quotations ; Euclid for calculations. But the best education of a young man is neither Greek nor Latin nor geometry ; it has nothing to do with the siege of windy Troy, nor with the

Persicos odi, puer, apparatus,

Bring me a chop and a couple of potatoes ;

nor with that long-legged isosceles triangle that bumptiously bestrides the asses' bridge. It is what a woman gives him. Sometimes it is the mother—always would it be so if mothers were not so terribly

like hens with broods of ducklings—so frightfully afraid of the young gentleman's taking to bad practices without giving anybody notice. Sometimes sisters—elder sisters, I mean—are of some service; but they are too often occupied with their own troubles, and with deciding whether they will be sisters of mercy or girls of the period. Cousins are better: one's cousins, strangely enough, seem seldom such fools as one's sisters. But sweethearts without kinship are best of all. No man finishes his education until he falls in love.

In the next sentence he expresses epigrammatically his idea of the difference between a Tory and a Liberal.

A Tory is a man who believes that England should be governed by gentlemen. A Liberal is a man who believes that any Englishman may become a gentleman if he likes.

In the next sentence he is roused to anger by what he has seen at an English fair.

The rough broad humour of the English fair was in full progress. It is always a vulgar sort of entertainment, with evil flavour of execrable beer and tobacco, and much looseness of discourse. You will get no better till you educate the people—and you will not educate the people until you learn that they are of more value than the land, or the cities of luxury, towers of labour, mansions of comfort, built upon the

land. If only our statesmen could be taught the one great political idea, namely, that God's noblest creation is an Englishman, and that if we develop the greatest possible number of perfect Englishmen, all other things will follow. People squabble over a Bishop who seems to tread on the verge of heresy: they do not stir a finger to rescue from poverty one street-boy, who will be a thief, but who might perchance be a Shakespeare, and therefore worth more than all the prelates and priests of all the Churches. How can men dare to waste in this foolish fashion the imperishable blood which filled the veins of Shakespeare, Milton, Byron?

In the next sentence he tells us what was so true, how intimately he knew his beloved Thames.

Then I walked away some four miles to my beloved river, the Thames—which I know intimately from Lechlade to the Nore, inch by inch—which, wherever I come upon it, whether narrow and vivacious in its upper reaches, or wide and imperial below the many bridges of London, always meets me like an old friend.

And in the next he is on the subject of which he never tired.

The play, so to speak, of a graceful and intelligent woman, is the most charming thing in the world. She is the consummate flower of creation. The light of her eyes, the movement of her lips, the tones of her voice, are all worth watching; her easy chat has no

wisdom in it, mayhap, nor any wit, yet is as fresh as dew and as fragrant as may-bloom; she brings to a manly and poetic mind the same pleasure—in a higher degree—as that produced by a summer landscape, with emerald grass and translucent water, and birds in full song amid the airy branches of the trees. There was a lady of whom it was said, “To love her is a liberal education.” To love women—as one loves nature or art or science—is the basis of the highest education. The hot amorist on the one hand, the cool cynic on the other, cannot know this. It is reserved for men in whom a strong sense of beauty is united with perfect intellectual sanity. This combination is rare.

In the next the author is describing a school-mistress. He objected to what is generally termed the strong-minded woman.

Miss Pinnock was a very superior woman, you know. But that confounded comparative does not seem a tempting epithet. Rosalind, and Miranda, and Juliet were not superior women. My own fancy is for a loveable woman—and really it would have been rather an impertinence to love Miss Pinnock.

CHAPTER VI.

1872.

MORTIMER COLLINS'S many and various powers are worth some notice. In prose he could write on almost any subject; in verse he could pen the elegant lyric, the keen epigram, or the political satire equally well. But with all this power he did not disdain to try and reach the intellects of the less educated classes.

Most readers will know the sort of entertainment that is styled "Penny Readings." "Penny Readings" were popular at Knowl Hill for some years, and he was a popular "penny reader;" but after a time he began to find it difficult to choose his subjects. Dickens and Ingoldsby were exhausted, and serious pieces were not liked.

His ideas on the subject can be given in his own words from "Adversaria" of February 17, 1872:—

Among the amusements of small villages the Penny Reading takes an important part. Having some experience thereof, I wish it could be better done. The parson might take as much trouble about them as he does about his sermons. People who come to laugh may be taught to think. There is this to be said: readers at even Penny Readings should know how to read, which is of all accomplishments the rarest. There is also this: they ought to know how to choose what they read, whereas they generally take something from a ridiculous series of cheap books, edited by an illiterate person named Carpenter. Now, what I venture to suggest is this: the parson of the parish makes his Sunday sermons, why should he not also make his weekday readings? Then he might say what, perhaps, he could not say from the pulpit, though Bishop Latimer would. I think the Penny Reading might be capitally utilized, if clerical readers would give something of their own in lieu of Tennyson's "May Queen," and the inevitable selections from "Pickwick."

This idea was carried out by his writing "readings" for Knowl Hill. They were merely in "pedestrian verse," as suited to the intellects of his audience; but there is the unmistakable hand in them. Perhaps they were a greater effort—if anything was ever an effort to him—than more polished lines.

The first is worth quoting entire, as it is a faithful description of the various people in the

village. The lord of the manor was Sir Gilbert East; the vicar was the Rev. A. H. Fairbairn, a simple, kind-hearted man, for whom Mortimer had a great regard, and who might be counted amongst his friends. He is a son of Sir William Fairbairn, and rowed with the Cambridge eight in two winning years.

The landlord of the village inn was accustomed to use very strong language, and the satire on this in the sixth verse is said to have cured him—partly at least. The village shopwoman was famous for love of gossip, and when Mortimer Collins read the verses he paused before the word “candle” in the eighth verse, which caused great laughter, and may have stopped scandal for the time, but did not cure it.

Life in a town is something I detest—
Even in London, of all towns the best
I have grown tired of noisy streets and squares,
Of lovely ladies with their numerous airs,
Of theatres where dancers show their limbs,
Of Parliament, where men parade their whims :
These I have heard and seen—would rather see
A Sunset—hear a thrush upon a tree—
Rather would ramble where the pheasants call,
Than meet Princesses at a royal ball.

Now let me sketch a village, such as we
Who live in England any day may see—

A straggling village round a pleasant hill,
Whence Windsor's ancient towers the eyesight fill—
A village with a church, whose chancel new
Makes its more ancient part look rather blue—
Where there are, perhaps, too many public-houses,
Too many folk who quarrel with their spouses,
Too many flighty girls whom dress engages,
Too many men who don't take home their wages.

Here, when the sun flings out his radiant banner,
I see the lord of this same village manor,
Who can drive miles upon his own good land,
Steer merrily by his dashing four-in-hand.
I like to hear his cheery horn, and see
Him hold the reins, while his swift team goes free,
I like to know that he desires to act
So that the commons may be held intact—
Green turf to tread upon—fair trees to view—
And ample elbow-room for me and you.

Next comes the parson, son of one whose fame
Is heard where'er is heard an English name—
One who has solved some problems that environ
The modern uses of the metal iron—
A metal which, school children should be told,
Is worth at least ten times as much as gold.
This of my friend, the vicar, I can say:
That well he does his duty every day,
Shines on the parish punctual as the sun,
Kind to the poorest, and unkind to none,
Tells truth to all his people—goes as straight
As when two victories crown'd the Cambridge eight.

Then there's a lady, whom I must not name—
Always devout, and good, and free from blame—
Who has no equal in her pious labours
For God, the Church, her friends, her needy neighbours.
No weather daunts her, and no danger frights ;
And I would be the foremost of her knights,
If any dared with one to interfere
Who strives to keep the village pure and clear,
Whose life is a fair picture of that love
Which finds sure recompense in realms above.

All villages have innkeepers—if any
Fault's to be found, our village has too many ;
I can but mention one, and he I think
Has this great virtue, that he does not drink.
This have I found in men of every station,
The hardest thing is to resist temptation.
He who resists, by a most fortunate fate,
Becomes each day a man of greater weight.
Our model landlord has not yet been “spiled ;”
They say his beer and language both are mild.

There is one man whom I would gladly praise,
Since he is rare in these degenerate days :
He is a character uncommon here ;
He has no word for either fraud or fear ;
He lazily at home doth never sit ;
He knows his business, and is proud of it ;
He keeps his workmen in due order ; they
Honour him well, work in the selfsame way.
To him this message do I gladly send—
It is a fortunate thing to call him friend.

That there's a Post Office of course occurs
To all our near nine hundred villagers,
That, if you pass its well-accustomed borders
You may get postage stamps and money orders ;
That, if awhile in that small space you stop,
You may discover 'tis a (s)candle shop,
And that its owner is more kind and good
Than others void of her sarcastic mood ;
That she will tell you tales of gossip, yet
If you are poor, your small account forget.

There also is the Bank, where all who're willing
To save their money, may put in a shilling ;
Or more if possible. Quite safe, 'tis seen,
For the banker is her Majesty the Queen.
Let every girl, who silver has to spare,
Think of her marriage, and take something there ;
Let every boy, who wants some day to wed,
Pass by the beer-house, and go there instead.

Squires have we many, round about the place ;
Some very liberal, some without that grace ;
Some with a generous, gentlemanly air,
But all possessing carriages and pair.
Carriage and pair a charming thing of course is,
If you build well the carriage and match the horses ;
But he who writes this doggrel rhyme avers
He'd rather comfort give to cottagers—
Make their rooms safe against the wind and rain,
Whitewash the parlour, and clear out the drain,
Treat the dependents in a generous way,
Having more pounds than they have pence a day.

But he must be a valiant man who dares
 To say a word to landlords, or their heirs ;
 Nor would I venture to admonish those
 Small gentlefolk who curiously suppose
 Themselves aristocratic, sit within,
 And look on poverty as quite a sin,
 And prowl about the village with grimace,
 And spoil the beauty of a lovely place,
 And look askew at you, and faintly fear
 You have not got a thousand pounds a year.
 Such folks I pity, but do not condemn :
 Their natural burden is enough for them.
 Useless to others they ; for, all the while,
 They neither give employment nor a smile.

The poor there are who beg ; the poor who stand
 Proud as the loftiest people of the land,
 Do honest work upon our Berkshire sod,
 Take their twelve shillings, and believe in God.
 These we must honour ; very hard their life.
 Happy the man who has a homely wife !
 One who makes home so warm, he passes by
 The lighted public-house without a sigh,
 Thinks not of wretched beer, remembers she
 Is waiting for him with a cup of tea ;
 [It should be home-brew'd ale, but that's the fault
 Of those who won't take off the tax on malt,]
 Thinks of his youngest darling's curly head,
 Goes home and sees the children put to bed.

Now this I say to those who, living here,
 - Desire their fellow-villagers to cheer,

Desire to see their poorest neighbours live—
 Give, but be very careful what you give.
 Give money never : give gifts seldom : you
 Who have the power, give them work to do.
 Give them kind words, too, when you meet, for He
 Who made both rich and poor is here to see,
 And, though we hardly think it, He is still
 Present within the precinct of Knowl Hill.

Mortimer Collins used to write Valentine
 verse to many of his friends. It was merely
 pretty doggrel, but it was lightly and elegantly
 done, and so exactly suited the person to whom
 it was sent. One or two specimens may be
 worth quoting. The following is to Miss
 L. C—— in 1872 :—

DEAR MISS LOUISA St. Valentine falls
 On Ash Wednesday which seems very wrong ;
 So I'm really afraid I must look out for squalls,
 If I send a ridiculous song.

But if I had ecclesiological lore
 At hand I could easily fish up
 Good proof that St. V., now a terrible bore,
 Was once a most orthodox bishop.

And in days that are past ere the traders and churls,
 Had debased the old custom so quaint,
 I think it was pleasant that boys and that girls
 Should pay their devoir to the saint.

They sang 'neath their Valentine's window, " Good
morrow ! "

While garlands they left at her door ;
No thought had these lovers of toil and of sorrow
Which inflexible Time has in store.

* * * * *

But this is no Valentine ! So to declare
Were sheer hypocritical quackery,
'Tis a cynical diatribe, not debonair
A mock of the manner of Thackeray.

May a serious wish my absurdity cure,
[To St. Valentine this I entrust]
May your health, beauty, happiness always endure,
As your wisdom and piety must.

In quite a different style are the following,
written in the measure of the " Groves of Blar-
ney," to an Irish lady :—

My dear Miss Ella,
I hope a fella'
Who's very married,
And drinks port wine,
May write to the Manor,
When amorous banner
Is held aloft by
St. Valentine.

You Irish ladies !
Good faith your trade is
To worry such restless
Hearts as mine ;

And the pen will splutter,
 And the words will stutter,
 As I write you a foolish
 Valentine.

I don't write blarney,
 [Which rhymes with Killarney],
 Are they both on the selfsame
 Railway line ?
 But I wish you a visit
 That's quite explicit
 From somebody sent by
 St. Valentine.

Let his form be gallant,
 And his brain have talent,
 Let his life be worthy
 Of a lordly line ;
 And then no hurt is,
 If sweet Ella C. . . .
 Deigns to receive him
 As her Valentine.

In March, 1872, he wrote in "Adversaria"
 as follows :—

Snow! The blackthorn winter! This, after the earliest spring I remember for years. Nature delights in these contrasts. As I write, my lawn is paven with snow; the white tumbler pigeons upon it, favourite birds of Aphrodite, look dirty against the Almighty Artist's whitest colour; the naked lime branches, "intersected and decussating" (as Samuel Johnson would

say) look like a colossal array of Honiton lace ; the white lilacs at the apex of my scalene triangle, which, in a few days would have offered their own fragrant snow, are laden with cool blossoms of frozen vapour.

About March, 1872, Mr. Campkin wrote to him, asking if he would contribute to a new paper called the *Court Express*, which was edited by a lady. The outside of the paper was wholly occupied by an advertisement of a chocolate company. Mr. Campkin had in his letter expressed his dislike of unusual words being used in his novels, such as “pervagate” and “arride.”

The following is the answer :—

DEAR CAMPKIN,—As I'm not a ninny,
 And don't despise the casual guinea,
 I'll scribble for the *Court Express* ;
 But pray describe the Editress—
 Late has she borne the school-girl's satchel, or
 Is she a rather antient bachelor,
 (Word which for spinster Johnson uses,
 'That learned servant of the Muses) ?
 I want to know her tresses' hue :
 Are both her eyes and stockings blue ?
 And do her pretty fingers hold
 Grey goose quill, or the pen of gold ?
 And has she got the sort of brain
 Which yields not chocolate but champagne ?

I think you ought to scribble some
 Of your new kind of conundrum :
 You know the sort I mean, each line
 Contains a word that makes no sign.
 Don't laze in the Reform Club's shade,
 But please the editorial maid.

Your firm, free, faithful fist to see
 Decidedly *arrideth* me ;
 But do you think to drive me straight,
 And teach me not to *pervagate* ?
 I truly wish you could : my wife
 Tries hard, but can't upon my life ;
 I'm chiefly troublesome when Eurus
 * " *Inverso mari* " comes to cure us
 Of thinking that the sweet spring time
 Will soon be here with rose and thyme,
 Instead of writing something Attic
 I get confoundedly rheumatic,
 Lose appetite for work and victual,
 And growl too much and write too little.

M. C.

* Horace A schoolfellow of mine
 Once made a hash of that same line,
 And put the class in a quandary
 By construing it . . . " *inverted Mary* ."

M. C.

Mortimer Collins's efforts to " please the editorial maid " were in vain, as he found that the politics of the paper were Liberal.

Early in 1872 a juniper-tree fell in the grounds of Miss L. C——'s father. The tree had been a favourite with the young people from childhood. The following lines were written to Miss Louisa C—— on its fall:—

I.

A tree upon a lawn may seem
 A trivial thing tho' full of leaf;
 But, if it vanish like a dream,
 One feels some grief.

II.

Its graceful foliage well you knew
 In childhood's days, long, long ago:
 But did the tree know aught of you?
 Ah, who can know?

III.

The Laureate sings the Talking Oak,
 With vegetable love astir:
 I wonder if it ever spoke . . .
 Your juniper.

IV.

I wonder if it council held
 With youth ambitious, amorous maid,
 When the tired blackbird's song was quell'd
 Beneath its shade.

V.

I wonder if at even-glome
 It loved your natural even-song,
 When girls sing happily at home,
 And think no wrong.

VI.

I can imagine many a scene
 Of tender thought and harmless glee :
 But, ah ! the tree has left the green ;
 Good-bye, old Tree ! M. C.

The next lines are part of a letter to Miss Clara S——, to thank her for a sofa-cushion which she had worked :—

MY DEAR MISS CLARA,—Had I known where a
 Letter would reach you on Valentine's Day,
 I'd have sent some rhyme, a dreadful crime,
 But you see I did not know the way.

But your tresses you'll toss, and you'll say, "No loss !
 What is a married man to me ?
 The young and gay whose beards aren't grey
 Are the rhymers that I like to see."

* * * *

Meanwhile much thanks for the pretty pranks
 Play'd on a cushion by your fair fingers :
 My wife with me was pleased to see
 That a memory of us within you lingers.

In April, 1872, was published "The British

Birds: a Communication from the Ghost of Aristophanes." This work is more quoted than any other of his. The author took pride in it, as it was written from love of the subject, and not for money. Aristophanes was a favourite with him. He would wander about the garden with some play of the great poet's, and occasionally read out a sentence to his secretary, and then translate it. He liked always to have some one with him to listen to his remarks, and his secretary never found a subject too dull or learned for her, because he took such infinite pains to explain everything; but had the listener been more capable of receiving knowledge, she might have been of more use in giving to others the benefit she received.

The "word-coinage" of Aristophanes pleased him. He has been accused of "word-coinage" himself. Perchance a word or two of his may take a permanent place in our language. Many unusual words in his books to which the critics have objected are simply old English, which he thought should not be lost.

"The British Birds" is an imitation of Aristophanes' "Birds." Some of the original

metres are used. To judge from the frequent quotations made from it, it would appear to be well known; but it is out of print, so it may not be inappropriate to quote a few lines, which are generally admitted to be clever, and which show the author's contempt for Positivism. They are supposed to be spoken by the Chorus:—

Life and the universe show spontaneity :
 Down with ridiculous notions of Deity !
 Churches and creeds are all lost in the mists :
 Truth must be sought with the Positivists.

Wise are their teachers beyond all comparison,
 Comte, Huxley, Tyndall, Mill, Morley, and Harrison :
 Who will adventure to enter the lists
 With such a squadron of Positivists ?

Social arrangements are awful miscarriages ;
 Cause of all crime is our system of marriages.
 Poets with sonnets and lovers with trysts
 Kindle the ire of the Positivists.

Husbands and wives should be all one community,
 Exquisite freedom with absolute unity.
 Wedding-rings worse are than manacled wrists ;
 Such is the creed of the Positivists.

There was an ape in the days that were earlier ;
 Centuries pass'd and his hair became curlier ;
 Centuries more gave a thumb to his wrist—
 Then he was MAN,——and a Positivist.

If you are pious (mild form of insanity),
 Bow down and worship the mass of Humanity.
 Other religions are buried in mists,
 We're our own gods, say the Positivists.

The covers of "The British Birds" were lined with bright blue paper. This is mentioned to account for some lines that will presently be quoted. About the time of the appearance of the book he had a sharp letter from a lawyer, written on the bluest paper, demanding a sum of money. The secretary, in sending the money, mentioned how unnecessary it was to have frightened her with such an unpleasant blue-looking letter, and she made some disparaging remarks on the conduct of attorneys generally. She received a most courteous reply on white paper. The courtesy of the lawyer pleased him so much that he asked the secretary to send him a copy of "The British Birds," with the following lines, supposed to be from her, on the fly-leaf, which was of bright blue:—

I send you, though 'tis summer time,
 And birds are out of season,
 Some birds dress'd up in reckless rhyme . . .
 With just a spice of reason.

The writer, wandering here and there
 In easy devious journeys,

Has very seldom had to swear . . .
Except at the attorneys.

But since your letter came to me,
So courteous, pleasant, witty,
He thinks a *gentleman* may be
A lawyer—in the City.

He does not wish all blue crush'd down,
Since [doubtless well you know it]
The City of the Violet Crown
Produced his favourite poet.

And in that town of wine and wit,
Attic, Aristophanic,
There never came a dull blue writ
To cause the poet panic.

Blue sea was there, blue æther too,
Groves with blue hyacinths scented,
Tory true blue . . . but paper blue
Had not then been invented.

The lawyer wrote to say that he tried to reply in verse, but as he was walking along Piccadilly, musing on what he should say, he heard a horn blow, and, looking up, saw Mr. Hoare's splendid four-in-hand team just starting from Hatchett's. A poor cab-horse near, fired with the sound of the horn, also made an attempt to start. The attempt of the poor

animal he felt was like his attempt, so he gave it up.

This incident with the lawyer is trivial, but there is something interesting in it. While Mortimer Collins is to be blamed for giving the necessity for a lawyer's letter, one cannot help feeling that a man who could put the whole thing in such poetical garb, deserved to be delivered from the poverty which the incident reveals.

The book was dedicated to Miss L. C——, and the following letter to her concerns the binding of the dedication copy :—

April, 1872.

DEAR MISS C——, The enclosed (from my publisher) will show that we must have patience in regard to your special copy of *our* book. There was a mystery play of the Middle Ages, in which two monstrous beasts, Bycorne and Chichevache, came on the stage. Bycorne was supposed to feed on patient men; Chichevache on patient women. So Bycorne was always shown too fat to move, and Chichevache on the verge of starvation.

Among the "Birds" sent out, of course one went to Jupiter Tonans, Esq.

I saw some swallows yesternoon at the parsonage. Should they not have reached the Poetage first?

Faithfully yours,

MORTIMER COLLINS.

One morning, when he was wandering in the village, he met Miss L. C—— and offered to carry her basket. He tried to guess what was in it, and could not. At parting, Miss C—— said mischievously, “You’ve been carrying a kitten all this time.” The following lines were written when he came home :—

MY DEAR MISS C——, Because of cats
Irreverently I’ve something written,
Doubtless you thought this morning “That’s
The man to carry home my kitten.”

I thought your basket held a pie,
By hungry peasant to be bitten—
Or something nice upon the sly
To eat yourself—but not a kitten.

O had the little cat cried “Mew,”
Your shrewd ænigma I’d have hit on ;
Big Dog was close beside us, too,
He’d have made mince-meat of the kitten.

They say that neither rat nor mouse
Is ever caught by cat in mitten ;
Well, there is something at your house
I fain would catch—’tis not the kitten.

No, ’tis the faded wool you said
Might in some nook perchance be lit on ;
Send any hue, from drab to red,
And I’ll forgive you for the kitten.

P.S.—On Monday next shall you
 A chair at Knowl Hill schoolroom sit on,
 Listening to singers who'll outmew
 The music of the famous kitten ?

In May, 1872, he writes thus on the death of
 Horace Mayhew :—

I am sorry to see my old friend Horace Mayhew
 is dead. He belonged to a class of men who never
 quite understand there is something to be done in
 the world. They are the Mercutios of society . . .
 though *him* I always called Horatio. They write and
 talk epigrams ; they produce comic books ; they are
 amusing at dinner. Life means more than that.

In the summer of 1872 Miss J. M—— was
 married. The following lines were written by
 Mortimer Collins, who ordered a number of copies
 to be printed on white satin and distributed
 amongst the guests at the wedding breakfast :—

The summer smiles on Josephine—

A bride this day.

Hers is a sweet and graceful mien,

A temper happy and serene,

A spirit gay.

Her life shall be a summer time,

And foliage green,

And birds' clear song and poet's rhyme,

Shall make a magic fairy clime

For Josephine.

I conjure up the Church's hush,
 This day, this day—
 The bridegroom's pride, the bridesmaids' flush,
 As with a lovely rosy blush
 She's given away !

A vision of the future blends
 With that bright scene.
 How happy is the man who spends
 A honeymoon that never ends
 With Josephine.

This example might well be imitated, for it would form a pretty feature at a wedding, and millionaires might give encouragement to poets, though a poet cannot always be *made* to sing, even for money.

In this place might be quoted some verses written to the same lady in the same metre some months after. The great elegance of the little poem may perhaps silence the objection which an excessively *nice* person would be inclined to make :—

Does winter smile on Josephine,
 A happy wife ?
 Her home to me's a pictured scene,
 I think of her its lovely queen,
 Enthroned for life.

I said her life shall summer be,
 Since well I know

Her sunny spirit, and that she
 From all its dreariness can free
 The winter snow.

I also know she'll make some day
 A sweet Mamma.
 Did I not hear a rumour say,
 That tiny lips were on the way
 To kiss Papa ?

The next I quote was sent to Miss L. C——,
 probably in June, 1872.

So, you've learnt to bud a rose,
 Work for fairy fingers,
 Come and bud some roses here,
 While the summer lingers ;
 While the south wind softly blows,
 While the tree-shoots harden,
 While the sky is azure-clear—
 That's the time to garden.

There was once a poet whom
 Ladies loved, though hideous ;
 " Metamorphoses " he wrote—
 Publius Ovidius :
 Human folk were taught to bloom
 When that bard I studied—
 I to be a rose-tree vote,
 And by you be budded.

The following was probably written just after the last one :—

Louisa, sweet lady,
As fickle as foam,
Our lime-trees were shady,
But you stay'd at home.

Our longings you flouted,
And wander'd elsewhere,
Our rose-trees all pouted—
And I tried to swear.

Those thorns you've not budded,
In sulkiness shut,
Declare that you studied
To give them a cut.

Your tendency vagrant,
I'm sorry to say,
Made somewhat less fragrant
The smell of the hay ;

Made rather less mellow
The mavis's tune ;
Turn'd sickly pale yellow
The ruddy round moon.

So, Frances, in small ways
Of wit an adept,
Says angels should always
In cages be kept.

MORTIMER AND FRANCES.

Miss L. C—— often came for an hour's chess

with him. He played well, but easily, and seemed to give no thought to it, and he liked a quick game. He was not, like most players, silent during the game, but would, while his opponent was giving all her thoughts to it, talk with any one else in the room. He made his own moves quickly, as he could see the situation at once, just as he could see a situation in politics or in any affairs of life. The following lines were written in August, 1872:—

When Miss Louisa ran away,
Was she afraid at chess to play?
A girl who runs away with laughter
Surely expects to be run after;
So I run after you with rhyme,
And say "Fair Enemy, keep time,"
Half-past eleven, unless there's frightening
Amount of thunder and of lightning.

The next letter is to Mr. T. E. Keibel, who had chambers in Hare Court, and lived at Streatham.

Knowl Hill,

September 13, 1872.

DEAR KEBBEL,—In Northumbria's classic street,
Surely you weary of September's heat;
And icy breezes I opine are rare
Amid the purlieus of the court of Hare;
Even at Streatham too they sometimes fail,
Where the rough doctor teased the flighty Thrale.

But here, beneath the umbrage of the limes,
 Even at noon 'tis cool enough for rhymes,
 While after sunset, when upon the lawn
 By Dian's pencil lines of light are drawn,
 The airs are sweet and soft . . . You seem to know
 Some magic garden of Boccaccio.

Why leave your coming till October? Why
 Wait for a shorter day, a greyer sky,
 Trees whose far scantier leaves turn brown and die,
 And not a swallow swimming in the sky?
 If I should have so fortunate a fate
 With you each day I long to radiate.
 Northward there's Marlow, where wild Shelley dwelt,
 And Bisham, where the Virgin Princess knelt,
 Quaintest of Abbeys that the Thames can boast,
 Right famous for a veritable ghost;
 The hell-fire club at Med'nam turn'd men pale;
 At Shenstone's Henley inn, there's noble ale;
 And you'll think Shiplake worth a walk, I'll swear,
 Swinburne was born, your Alfred married there.
 I might go on with topologic lore,
 Until you voted me an awful bore,
 But 'tis near post-time, so I'll only say,
 Come in September, till October stay.

MORTIMER COLLINS.

Mr. Keibel replied with the following lines:—

Close and dull is the Court of Hare,
 But then, as it happens, I am not there:
 Though never a breeze at Streatham quivers,
 I, you see, am at Wootton Rivers.

A velvet lawn, a moss-grown cherry,
 A lingering lunch and some old brown sherry ;
 Church at five for the good of your soul,
 Dinner at seven, with humours droll,
 And an extra bottle to settle the whole,
 I swear tho', can hardly me console
 For not being able to come to Knowl.

T. E. KEBBEL.

To this Mortimer Collins sent the following
 reply (the word he could not understand was
humours) :—

DEAR KEBBEL,—Down near Forest Gate,
 Where Ailesbury's avenues are famous
 'Tis pleasant, faith, to walk elate,
 Fearless of Pall Mall WE's mandamus.

Across the turmuts and the stubble,
 I picture you with gun and setters,
 Escaped from journalistic trouble . . .
 A devilish lucky man of letters.

Talking of letters pray what's this ? . . .
 All m's and u's, a cipher curious ;
 It baffles my analysis ;
 'Twould make a Pall Mall printer furious.

I hope you'll pray for us at five,
 Drink 'tother flask, and yet keep sober,
 And if we're all of us alive,
 Be with us early in October.

MORTIMER COLLINS.

In October, 1872, a good friend sent a truck-load of coal to him, when the following lines were written by way of thanks :—

We're not in the land where Ilissus
From a hill of white marble flows down
To the city where Pallas was Missus,
The Astu with violet crown.

We're shut up by Jupiter pluvius,
Whose reservoirs flow o'er their brink :
But your coals are a perfect Vesuvius,
And I manage . . . with claret and ink.

Those quarries of famous Hymettus
Were fairer mayhap on the whole :
It rains in old England . . . so let us
Be thankful for hot-burning coal.

The sculptors of Greece were diviners
Of beauty in marble that lurk'd :
Just now I prefer the shrewd miners
Who know where good coal can be work'd.

A very pretty poetical reply was sent to these lines called "Wallsend Warblings," in which the coal is made to say that during all the centuries it was maturing in the earth it had dreams of its coming greatness.

I feel that hopes of centuries and all the promised bliss,
Are far surpass'd by being burnt in such a home
as this . . .

A home that may be envied by princes of the earth.

This reply brought another from Mortimer, who wrote as follows :—

DEAR CHARLIE,—Your Muse puts poetical garb on
A lump of that prosy material carbon :
When the core of the coal with a poker I win,
Your wit like a diamond is lurking within.

That lump was a log of some mighty tree-giant,
Primæval, prodigious, divinely defiant,
It caught the gay life throughout æther that rolls,
Before there were poets, before there were coals.

Even coal does not perish : that lump I can swear,
Has pass'd as a gas into ambient air ;
It deserves a new life for its lyrical vein . . .
When we meet in Elysium we'll burn it again.

The first paragraph in the next letter refers to Pugin's monograph on Shottesbrooke. Shottesbrooke church is two miles from Knowl Hill, and is a fine specimen of thirteenth century architecture. Mortimer Collins used to take his friends to see it. In the churchyard there is a tombstone with nothing but the initials and date of birth and death of the man buried there with the inscription *Hic jacet maximus peccatorum*. Mortimer said he thought it very conceited for a man to apply such a term to himself. The second paragraph refers to a kindness done

by Mr. Campkin for an old gardener in Mortimer Collins's service: and the third to Mr. E. F. Flower, now famous for his good and kind attempt to do away with the bearing-rein in driving.

12th November, 1872.

DEAR CAMPKIN,—The Shottesbrooke monogram was published by J. H. and J. Parker (Oxford Glossary Parker) but I have never seen it.

The Missus wrote to you *re* Buckett yesterday, but omitted to post her letter. He is delighted.

Glad to hear Flower has not forgotten me and our old chess tussles. I hope he is better. I should like some day to look in upon him at Stratford.

My son-in-law is going to fish for Sir Willoughby Ware when he goes to the British Museum. I have no doubt he will find it.

Always yours,

M. AND F. C.

During 1872 there were many *Knowl Hill Rhymes* written on pleasant evenings, when there were visitors, but they so particularly concern the people present at the writing, that they cannot be quoted. There is one, however, dated November, of which the first verse can be given.

These rhymes of Poet's Cottage at Knowl Hill
May possibly in time a volume fill.

Our notion in this cottage far from town,
 Where income don't go up though friends come down,
 Is just to chronicle the happy life
 Led by a lazy author and his wife :
 Who like to meet their various friends at home,
 And sometimes think their friends are glad to come.

Dr. Steele was travelling in Italy at this time,
 and sent Mortimer a description of his travel in
 verse.

He replied in the same metre :—

13th November, 1872.

STEELE, old friend, your rhymes are famous,
 You're no shallow ignoramus,
 And I send you a mandamus

To go on as you've begun.

Then as your swift track I follow,
 Like the southward-flying swallow,
 I shall think divine Apollo

Holds you for a favourite son.

* * * *

You I picture as your pen is,
 Driven to song by magic Venice,
 Where the ancient glorious den is
 Of the lions of St. Mark.

Onward fare, poetic Briton,
 Write again as you have written,
 Under soft skies sunset-smitten,
 Where Ausonia's Zephyrs stir.

Be of poet gold a minter :
 Better far than oak-log's splinter ;
 Your gay rhyme will cheer the winter
 For your comrade—MORTIMER.

The next is to Miss L. C——, when she was staying in London in November, 1872.

November, 1872.

DEAR MISS LOUISA,—I have heard of you
 In Paternoster Row.
 Even London fog must yield to ladies who
 Take sunshine where they go.

I can imagine the unusual stir
 Amid the busy mass :
 Each author-crushing, flint-soul'd publisher
 Look'd round to see you pass.

Longman grew young again, and Blackwood bright
 To see a form so fair :
 And my ecclesiastic cousin quite
 Forgot his books of prayer.

The grimy Row of Books has had its feast :
 Yet perhaps Louisa will
 Remember that she has two friends at least
 Who miss her from Knowl Hill.

M. AND F. C.

December the first was the birthday of a servant lad who lived with him some years. The village shopwoman who kept the post-

office sent him a present of a necktie and some sweets, and Mortimer Collins wrote some lines for him to send in answer. These are quoted to show that a man with such intellectual power did not think it too much trouble to write rhymes for his servant. The postmistress was accustomed to be addressed officially as the Major Sub-Postmistress.

To the Major Sub-Postmistress Tom returns thanks,
For her beautiful tie and good wishes,
Now he's fifteen years old 'tis with her that he banks,
And her sweets he considers delicious.

He hopes in reply that a fortune she'll make
By savings' banks, orders, and letters,
Retire by-and-by, and not bother to bake,
But set up a coach like her betters.

It was about this time that the following letter was written to George Augustus Sala. I do not know what the joke is about caviare and Rudesheimer—probably Mr. Sala does—but I believe it has reference to something written by him. Drs. Steele and Anstie were Mr. Sala's medical advisers.

DEAR SALA,—As I hear you're ill,
Let me be medical adviser,
Avoid the potion and the pill—
Doctors don't take them, they are wiser.

If Steele and Anstie loudly swear
That you to heaven will be a climber,
Call for a plate of caviare,
And wash it down with Rudesheimer.

At any rate get well agen,
We must not spare your fertile fancy,
Your swift unweariable pen,
The triumphs of your cheiromancy,
The flights no other man may dare,
The style [as I'm an honest rhymmer]
That gives you thirst like caviare,
And quenches it like Rudesheimer.

M. C.

On Dec. 8th, 1872, he received a letter from Mrs. J. V., in answer to an invitation to herself and her husband to pay a visit to Knowl Hill. They had both been frequent visitors, and Mr. J. V. built a rustic verandah, and made the owl's cage, and did many little things in a kind way. The letter contained the following sentence :—

Do you think you could engage the same kind of charming abode, and be both your own dear selves in the next world ? because with life immortal and time unceasing we might attempt such a meeting as the one you propose.

In answer to this he sent the following:—

DEAR MRS. J. V.,—I

Approve your notion and already
Have hired that cottage in the sky—
Beyond the world's tumultuous eddy.

It is a new Knowl Hill, the rooms
Are loftier and far more airy ;
No rains there are or cloudy glooms
The milky way's the nearest dairy.

Some alteration needed is,
Indeed to make the place as grand as
We wish it, there is work for V. . . . ,
He'll hew fir poles and build verandahs.

We won't forget this sombre land
Where for the bard none cares a button ;
We'll sometimes think it is the Strand,
And you shall roast a leg of mutton.

The grass is always velvet soft,
Fresh grows each flower whene'er you pluck it,
Still there are gardeners up aloft,
Buckett must come—and kick the bucket.

If we can't pass the time away
In such a place, the devil's in it ;
So fix the day to come and stay,
There are express trains every minute.

Growl and Big Dog both pine for sky,
Thinking it never can be slow there,
While as to fidgety old Fi,
Skyeborn he claims a right to go there.

M. C.

Bucketts was an old gardener who was employed by him for some years.

The next letter is to Dr. Steele, who had returned from his travels in Italy.

Steele, my boy, you are Italy mad,
So I send you a screed in Dante's rhyme,
With, instead of iambs, dactyls mad.

We are jolly down here in the snowy time,
With coals ablaze, with books to read,
And with books to *write*, confound it! I'm

At the end of one that's a wonder indeed
Full of things all done in a single day,
That will beat ——

I will tell you all when you come this way,
Come soon and bring the aroma of Rome,
The spirit you caught from Parthenope's bay,

And humour of love from Boccaccio's home,
And make this winter of England gay,
With soft susurrus of Mid Sea foam.

The last letter in 1872 which I shall quote is to Miss M. A. S., who was spending the winter in France.

December 17, 1872.

DEAR ANNIE,—When Clara was writing
Her letter from over the sea,
Why didn't you think of inditing
A pretty epistle to me?

Are you getting uncommonly lazy
Through having your breakfast in bed ?
All Frenchmen in love become crazy,
So perhaps they are turning your head.

But I fear men of race 'tis expelling,—
This wretched republican dance :
And far from Versailles they are dwelling,
The ancient patricians of France.

Poor Paris must move one to pity,
So terribly injured to-day ;
I remember it, beautiful city,
Ere Napoleon improved it away.

He ruin'd much beauty and quaintness
To make it subservient to him ;
He left it in cowardly faintness,
When Prussia grew earnest and grim.

But, Annie, I want to discover
When you're bringing to England your *nous*,
Are you coming to look for a lover ?
Are you coming to look for a house ?

A house with a garden and paddock,
And a very poetical name,
Where you'll breakfast on bacon and haddock,
And dine upon mutton and game ;

A house where you'll find a queer garret
For a queer sort of fellow like me,
Just give me a bottle of claret,
And you shall not be ruin'd in tea.

I'd much rather wish you a master
Of good constitutional stuff ;
But, alack ! tho' the world revolves faster,
Of such there are hardly enough.

He should be—the man I imagine—
Of temper complete and serene,
Who never would go with a badge in
His coat to be seen by the Queen.

Who could not do anything shady,
Had plenty of strong common sense,
Was never afraid of a lady,
Was never afraid of a fence.

That's the man . . . if you manage to bind him
In fetters of loving romance :
Come back to old England and find him . . .
There's nothing of that sort in France.

M. AND F. C.

CHAPTER VII.

1873.

IN January, 1873, Mortimer's old friend James Hannay died, and the following verses were written. James Hannay was Consul at Barcelona at the time of his death :—

Lost the ripe scholar and the writer rare,
Whose pen possess'd a keen, satiric touch—
Who through his lifetime breathed Olympian air,
Who never wrote or said a word unfair,
Whom those who knew loved much.

Witty but with deep wisdom in his wit ;
Gay with the easy gaiety of power ;
Ah, it was pleasant with our friend to sit,
As he took up some theme and play'd with it
Through midnight's brilliant hour !

In his young work there was free breath of brine
Caught when his frigate sail'd the midland sea :
After came flavour of the old Greek wine,
Drunk before Troy by hero-lips divine,
When life was full of glee.

Ah, James! old friend, your hand in Spain is chill,
 That has clutch'd mine so many a merry night;
 But you have something far too great to kill,
 A clear strong soul, a high and dauntless will—
 These live in God's own light.

The second verse exactly describes Mortimer Collins himself, as well as his friend.

Perhaps it is here worth mention, now that "lady-helps" have become an established fact, that he published in the *John Bull* newspaper, in January, 1873, an article on "Waiting Gentlewomen." This article was written some two years before, and intended to be one of a series of essays. This was, I think, before Mrs. Crawshay started "lady-helps."

The next letter is to Miss M. A. S., who had returned to England from her trip on the Continent.

DEAR ANNIE,—Wind is in the East,
 Pain in my knees is much increased,
 I swear [like you] I'm snarling;
 But through this time of snow and ice,
 I think your letters very nice,
 I think you quite a darling.

When will you come to see us—be
 At home a week or two and see
 A few of our young fellows?

Enjoy the easy merry time,
 And you shall flirt and I shall rhyme,
 My wife is never jealous.

We'd like to see you when you will,
 We'll make you cosy at Knowl Hill,
 So, child, when you can spare a
 Few days come down and stay with us,
 We shall not make the slightest fuss,
 My love to little Clara.

There were generally seven or eight Valentines written every year, besides some for the secretary to send to her friends. Of those written in 1873 I quote four.

TO MISS CLARA S.

Little Clara the lazy
 Away down at Brighton
 Other ladies will frighten,
 Quite queen of her sex.
 She'll drive the men crazy ;
 Love's gale will blow stiff there ;
 We shall hear on the cliff there
 Of many male wrecks.

Dear Clara, be jolly,
 The wind from the ocean
 Blows fanciful notion
 And bother away.
 I send you this folly
 To give you some laughter ;
 She'll say I have chaff'd her,
 On Valentine's day.

To MRS. J. V.

The weather is growing more sunny,
The world looks a trifle more gay,
So perhaps I may send you some funny
Scraps of rhyme upon Valentine's Day.

When I in the world a new comer,
My verse to the universe sung,
'Twas O, that it always were summer!
And O, that I always were young!

Tho' older and frostier, gaily
I meet all the ills on my way,
But you become wittier daily
And are younger each Valentine's Day.

To MRS. G. S.

DEAR JOSEPHINE,—But may I write
A Valentine to you?
I'm really in an awful fright,
Please tell me what to do.

I love you just as much as when
We used to spend the day so
Delightfully. Alas! but then,
Will some one let me say so?

Amid the dull world's toil and strife,
This fact you may discover,
Tho' Josephine's a happy wife,
She has another lover.

To Miss M. A. S.

DEAR ANNIE,—As I wrote you rhymes
A day or two ago,
Forgive me if the rhymes I write
This day are rather slow ;
For poets may be dull sometimes,
And wit won't overflow,
But I will always be your knight,
As well you know.

In honour of St. Valentine
The sun comes out to-day,
And my absurd rheumatic pains
Takes happily away.
That Saint's first favourite of mine,
Excepting St. Peray ;
Over you pretty girls he reigns
With tyrant sway.

So now, Miss Annie, please observe,
You fear the nuptial joy,
And say you could not let a man
Your liberty destroy ;
From that resolve by no means swerve,
Be modest, choice, and coy,
But just a little change your plan
And try a boy.

In February, 1873, was published "Squire Silchester's Whim" [Henry S. King and Co., 65, Cornhill]. The writer's idea was to show

that a girl and boy could be educated without learning to read and write; but he does not keep sufficiently to his subject. There are, as usual, too many characters and incidents in the book, and it is altogether rather wild and improbable; but there is also the original style, the epigrammatic English, and the sweet lyrics which make Mortimer Collins's novels, however inartistic, worth reading. A few sentences may help to show the author's character. In the first volume he describes a parlour very much like his own:—

They were sitting side by side on one of those dear old parlour window-seats that held out in Devon longer than in any other county. Is there a parlour all through England now? Or have the [with] drawing-rooms exterminated them.

Parlour! How I like the word! A room for chat, talk, gossip. A room without stiffness. A room for afternoon. It had no antimacassars; and the big mastiff lounged in to see who called; and there might be a volume of Swift or Fielding on the window-seat.

Again he makes the Squire say,—

I know it were vain to try and abolish money, but I think I can teach my boy and girl that money is a mere representative of goods, and that a sovereign is no better than a pound's worth of dung in a cart. In

like manner I have no desire to revolutionize the world and abolish writing and printing; but my children shall not be taught to read and write. I will teach them by the living voice. I will put theology and science in verse for them, when necessary; but I will, in the first place, make them learn from me the noblest poetry in English. Their eyes shall be taught not to pore over type, though it were Baskerville's clearest, but to see the robin singing on its branch, the wren hiding in foliage, the heron fishing its pool, and suddenly astounded when the hawk swings into poise above it, the water-rat washing his wiry whiskers, the otter lying in the river like a stone, for fear of dogs on the margin—all the beauties and excitements of nature.

When he describes the Squire's feelings about his library, he was simply describing his own:—

In my library, he was wont to say, I am ten paces from Homer, though there are thirty centuries of human life between us. I can recall Aristophanes on the instant, to give me all the witty chaff of Athens. Here is my favourite philosophic poet, Lucretius; here also my favourite amorous poet, Catullus; both ready to give me their ideas, if only I am fortunate enough to understand them. Shakespeare will step from that shelf when I ask him, surrounding me with such strong humanity and strange romance as never came beneath wand of any other enchanter. Even the spirits of men still living are summoned at my will. I sit here as a magician beyond the reach of

with him. Where there is true marriage, divorce is impossible. Where there is false marriage, divorce is certain—without legal interference.

Again, talking of marriage, he says it is—

The great secret—a secret greater far than that of death. Death puts you in the hand of God, and you are safe; marriage puts you in the hand of man—or of woman.

“Squire Silchester’s Whim” was dedicated to Fred Locker, “Poet and Friend of Poets,” an old friend of Mortimer’s.

On March the 1st he received a letter from a friend, who wrote laughingly of feeling ready to throw himself into the Thames, as he was out of health. The following reply was sent:—

DEAR H——, ... The sunshine is glowing,
The flowers are all turning to gems,
So don’t you be thinking of throwing
Yourself into water of Thames.

The notion would make a man shiver,
Moreover existence is dear,
So come down and walk to the river,
And end with a tankard of beer.

The Missus will give you a lecture
 On mental and bodily health,
 A thing which as wise folk conjecture,
 Is better than scheming for wealth.

As for me, I will plague you with banter,
 And plenty of rascally rhymes,
 And frequently fill the decanter,
 And drink just a little sometimes.

The next is to Miss Louisa C. on 9th March,
 1873 :—

Saturday, no, Sunday morning, half-past twelve.

DEAR MISS LOUISA,—I am truly sorry you should have been self-tormented a moment on my account. As I am the culprit, I ought to pay all the penalty. I will not read your letter, though my wife maintains it would do me good.

I have just written a paraphrase of the collect. Of course I know well that my verse is far inferior to the beautiful old simple prose, but perhaps it may please you. The collects of the Church are a marvellous series, so logical in construction, so simply-sublime in idea. If my verse seems very tame, throw it in the fire.

Almighty God, who seest that we no power
 Can have to help ourselves in any hour,
 Keep us in all that touches outward life,
 Its pleasure and its pain, its love and strife;
 Keep us in that mysterious soul, whose end
 Is to Thy golden footstool to ascend;

So shall the body from all ills be free,
 And evil thoughts which turn the soul from Thee,
 Shall be driven back unto their native den.
 We ask through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Always yours,
 M. C.

The following letter has no date, but was written about this time to Miss Louisa C. :—

LOUISA,—Gay yet tender, you,
 Being so thoughtful and so true,
 Teach what I rather guess'd than knew,
 What Friendship is.

It is, methinks, 'twixt you and me,
 [That *me* is plural, you will see]
 Exchange of kindness, full and free,
 The Spirit's kiss.

Some things we cannot put in words—
 Strange sunsets, fluid flute of birds,
 Green meadow slopes, with browsing herds,
 Swift flight of swallows.

And so I feel my rhymes are tame,
 But still I write them all the same,
 For when I write Louisa's name
 True friendship follows.

MORTIMER AND FRANCES.

Mortimer Collins was accustomed for some six years before his death to write verses on the first of April to Miss Louisa C. and his secretary.

The following were written to Miss L. C. in this year :—

Have the snow-storms taken flight ?
 Are their heaps of violets white ?
 Do the children's fingers go
 Into that soft fragrant snow ?
 'Tis the sweetest time o' the year,
 Soon the swallows will be here,
 Swims the swift across the foam,
 Sings the thrush at even-glome.
 So as all the world is gay,
 Let's be April fools to-day.

Long ere you were robed in silk
 I was sent for pigeon's milk ;
 Gravely now this planet rolls,
 Bills I keep in pigeon-holes ;
 Still I love the twilight hush,
 And the self-repeating thrush,
 And a lady's fancies fair,
 Suited to the sweet spring air.
 So till care the spirit cools
 Let us both be April fools.

Postscript—

I forget : you play at whist :
 So your wisdom would be miss'd.
 Whist's to me an awful joke,
 You should see how I revoke,
 Knaves and aces I detest—
 Kings are duller than the rest.

Only card that joy imparts
 Is Louisa, Queen of Hearts.
 Throw the Ace of Trumps away,
 Let's be April fools to-day.

The following is part of a letter sent to a friend:—

When from the Palace of the Press
 You look o'er lake and valley,
 You'll cast a thought towards us, I guess,
 Green lawn and linden alley.

No trivial triumph doth record
 That tower that skyward climbs :
 Genius has drawn a truthful sword
 Full often in the *Times*.

If now and then its wisdom err,
 Its courage does not falter,
 Thus say I, tho' no worshipper
 O' the politics of Walter.

Tory of ancient faith am I,
 Yet 'tis my favourite journal ;
 It will not stoop to print a lie,
 And truth is statecraft's kernel.

The following four lines which belong to about this date, were sent pinned on Miss L. C.'s muff, which she left at the Cottage.

If this arrives before you start
 'Twill warm your fingers [like your heart].
 You left it for a joke, I guess,
 Knowing that I'm a muff at chess.

M. AND F.

The next speaks for itself.

Sunday, May 4th, 1873.

TO LOUISA, FROM MORTIMER AND FRANCES.

We thank you for your marmalade,
 By dainty fingers deftly made,
 From oranges of Seville ;
 I do not say " Please send some more,"
 Or else you'd vote me quite a bore,
 And wish me at the D—— !

A very small return is ours,
 A handful of the vernal flowers
 That gleam and glance and glitter ;
 Sweet flowers with you must sweeter grow,
 In life (and marmalade) you know
 How to get sweet from bitter.

The next lines were probably written just after the night's work was finished, for Mortimer sometimes worked till daylight, and he would then take a walk round the garden before going to bed.

It is said that it is unlucky to hear the cuckoo before the nightingale, and Milton refers to this

in a sonnet. The verses were addressed to Miss L. C.

Milton the prince of sonneteers,
 As sure as I am born,
 Had given his poetic ears
 To hail this merry morn.

The dew [at five] is falling fast,
 The sky as yet is pale,
 But you have brought good luck to me,
 I've heard the nightingale.

That bird whose passion of regret
 Eternally endures,
 Sings a sweet, soft sermonette
 Almost as good as yours.

M. AND F.

The next lines are to Miss L. C., to thank her for some cups and saucers, which were of various colours, what is termed "a harlequin set." The first line refers to Orange Pekoe tea, which we were accustomed to call O. P.

We to-day have drunk O. P.
 Out of cups and saucers three ;
 Green the Missus chose, for she
 Loves the green of lawn and tree ;
 Ella radiant, Irish elf,
 Chose the strawberry, like herself,
 Fragrant fruit, not ever sour,
 Darling of the summer hour ;

Mine was hue of richest cream,
 Colour quite unfit, you'll deem :
 Not at all—that dainty hue
 Makes me always think of you.
 Delicate and debonair,
 Cream of ladies, kind as fair.

M. C.

The next were written just before the Derby Day, and when Miss L. C. had been photographed, to which he alludes in the second verse.

THE DERBY DAY, 1873.

On Monday, lady of the laughing lips,
 You and the sun both suffer'd an eclipse,
 Though glad of sunshine on earth's grassy floor,
 We miss the lovelier luminary more.

On Tuesday, from exuberance of fun,
 You went and made wry faces at the sun ;
 Apollo won't put up with such disgrace,
 He'll do his best to spoil that laughing face.

What Wednesday brings, of course, I cannot say.
 Are you whirl'd off to adorn the Derby Day ?
 I hardly dare to think such things of you.
 Still, if the Archbishop and the Dean went too,
 Perch'd on a four-horse drag, with veils of blue,
 Their orthodoxy might perchance suffice
 To make you think hot wine and noise "so nice."

MORTIMER AND FRANCES.

In June he writes thus on Mr. Sheridan Le Fanu :—

It is seldom one has an intimate friend for years, yet never sees him to his death. This chanced to be the case between the late Sheridan Le Fanu and myself. Ill-health kept him in Dublin, and confined him for years to his room—years during which I had no time to visit Ireland. So, though we were in active literary correspondence, I have never seen him, and now he has passed away, after much excellent work, under conditions of extreme suffering. He was a capital poet, as well as a brilliant and intense novelist.

The next letter is to Miss Louisa C., to thank her for some strawberries which arrived on Mortimer's birthday, June 29th.

MY DEAR LOUISA,—Let me say
That you are far too kind to-day ;
Your gifts are magical and elfish,
Your conduct is extremely selfish,
For it delights you, lady sweet,
To send us strawberries to eat ;
You please yourself. You'll please us more,
Unless you deem it quite a bore,
To come and chatter, and eclipse
Your fragrant fruit with laughing lips.

M. AND F.

P.S.

I hope you will not quite disdain
This letter blotted by the rain.

'Tis written in our indolent times,
While rain comes pattering through the limes.

P.P.S.

What made your strawberries more pleasant
They reach'd me as a birthday present."

Mortimer used to say that people were selfish when they did a kindness to another, because they pleased themselves, and that selfishness was an admirable characteristic in any one, as it meant cultivation of the soul or self. Then he did not use the word in the ordinary way.

In June, 1873, Mortimer Collins wrote the following in the *Press and St. James's Chronicle* :—

"This week I visited the Palace of a Prince of the Press. Although the architecture was not precisely what I should have chosen for myself, I naturally rejoiced that journalism could lead to such grandeur. You may see the splendid, stately house miles away, even as you may feel on the other side of the world the influence of the famous newspaper that built it. Yet, after admiring the place as it deserves, I came to the conclusion that we English have lost the art of house-building. Why should not a palace be as snug and cosy as a cottage? For this reason, that the modern architect has not the comprehension and constructive power which belonged to his antecessors. We have lost sight of the fundamental axiom that beauty depends

on utility. There must be a tower at one of these big houses; but why a tower, unless it is for an observatory? If I were a millionaire with a great house to build, there should be towers, certainly; but they should carry a reflecting telescope as large as Lord Rosse's, and should have apartments for a staff of sleepless astronomers.

At the house which I now vaguely describe there is a charming picture-gallery lighted from the ceiling. Most of the pictures are by Dutch masters; there is a wonderful Paul Potter, a young bull and two cows, real as life; there are some noble examples of Ostade and Mieris, the only paintings of another school which struck me were two beautiful Canalettis. One of these seemed to me as fine as anything I have ever seen from the hand of the immortal Venetian. What cunning there was in the brush that placed on canvas, canal and lagoon, palace and bridge, with perfect accuracy of touch! However, the picture that struck me most was in the dining-room: a grand Ostade, "Peter denying Christ." The recreant apostle and the girl accusing him are nobly painted; but a Roman soldier, who looks at Peter with an air of complete contempt, is one of the finest figures I remember on canvas. The great painter has managed to put into that Roman face the feelings which Rome had for despised races. He breathes the very spirit of Cæsar.

Splendid deodaras and wellingtonias ornament the grounds; and the woods, new growth of an old forest, have beech-trees which, in another century, will be as fine as those in the Chiltern Hills about Great Hampden. There is a lovely lake—artificial, though one

would not think it—studded with islands, and populous with wild duck. On this lake we rowed, and a lady in my company exclaimed, “This is *too* delicious.” We may enjoy life

“With indolent fingers fretting the tide,
And an indolent arm round a darling waist.”

What more shall I say? Miles of grapes, peaches, and nectarines galore. Dairy and laundry on a giant scale. I went away a meditative man, thinking it well to be a prince of the press.”

In July the following lines were sent to Miss L. C. :—

Ille salubres

*Æstates peraget, qui nigris prandia moris
Finiat, ante gravem quæ legerit arbore solem.*

Thus Horace writes: Now would you like,
Louisa, a translation?
Upon the proper words I'll strike
With little hesitation.

He who calm summers would conduct
Through hours of health and pleasure,
Should eat ripe mulberries, early pluck'd—
For they're a perfect treasure.

So much for Horace. You will say,
“There, that's that rhyming fellow:
He thinks I'll think of him some day
When mulberries are mellow.”

Perhaps that is his present whim,
But you're a spirit softener,
And oft as you may think of him,
He'll think of you much oftener.

M. C.

On July the fourteenth a couple of handsome knives for cutting quills were sent to Mortimer by Byron Blewitt, his doctor, and one of his most intimate friends.

The knives were made by Weiss. The following letter of thanks was sent. The Montalti blade is an allusion to an incident in "Sweet Anne Page."

BYRON,—You are extravagant, I fear
To set thin blades in antler of the deer,
Mount them in carven silver, send them here.

Montalti blades and temper'd like the ice,
Upon my honour, they are very nice.
And I am grateful, sir, to you and Weiss.

And when I cut a quill to pen a rhyme,
Or write three volumes against tide and time,
I'll think of you, my friend, and grow sublime.

And when it is a case of party strife,
And Toryism has to fight for life,
My wit shall borrow keenness from your knife.

So if some lucky morning fame arrives,
 Or if some trivial thing of mine survives,
 The credit will be due to Byron's knives.

M. AND F.

The next is to Miss L. C., in answer to a letter in which she had written the word *love* three times over, for the three inmates of the Cottage.

July, 1873.

Love, love, love, writes dear Louisa,
 Love to Ella, the Missus, and me :
 And I *do* like love
 All gifts above
 That the good God gives upon land and sea.

Yes, yes, yes, our dear Louisa,
 This we do declare, all three :
 Not the sunset blush
 Nor song of the thrush
 Is half so sweet as your love, say we.

MORTIMER AND FRANCES.

In July, 1873, was published "Miranda: a Midsummer Madness" [Henry S. King and Co.]. It was dedicated to

HENRY CAMPKIN,

Poet and Archæologist.

Mr. Campkin sent his thanks very prettily in

verse, and Mortimer replied to his verse in the same metre.

Thanks, Campkin, for your verses :
 Your thoughtful muse rehearses
 The history of literature past ;
 Ere men made Dedications,
 Not to patrons, but to nations,
 Ere we found the real Cynosure, at last.

The world is patron glorious
 To the poet, when victorious,
 Yet, friend, there is a difference betwixt us :
 What high poetic splendour
 Would that same world surrender
 But for Virgil's and Horace's Mæcenas.

That Entity, the many,
 Is ready with its penny,
 Not so ready to discern 'twixt false and true :
 Oft genius is derided
 By a multitude misguided ;
 Give me him who is friend and patron too.

What use were some new planet,
 With no Adams near to scan it ?
 'Twould never join the cycle of the stars.
 Lo, comes a great new poet !
 The public will not know it,
 Unless he is as militant as Mars.

The " Amor nummi crescit,"
 In vain would we suppress it :

If it were not for what sordid coin will do,
 I would never ask a penny
 From the much misguided many,
 I would dedicate my volumes to the few—
 Choice spirits who can judge true work—like you.
 M. AND F. C.

“Miranda” is perhaps the maddest of all his novels, but there are plenty of pretty lyrics and original ideas in it, and there is material enough for three or four novels.

I will quote three or four sentences where the author shows his own character and opinions.

On his favourite subject of good and poetic women he says,—

Now a woman may be a very good woman without being a lady; and a lady may be a very nice or generous or aristocratic lady, without being a poetic lady.

What is a poetic lady? say you. Such a lady as steps out of a play of our dear Shakespeare, and is full of poetry without the least knowledge thereof. Rosalind or Portia or Miranda. Poetic ladies are to be met very often, thank God, in this England of ours, and are the sweetest flowers of our race. Race may be tested by its power of developing the heroic gentleman and the poetic lady. Both of these are easy to find among the English. Shall I describe them?

The heroic gentleman is the man who will go any-

where and do anything. Nelson and Wellington were fine recent types of this character. But there are plenty of them at this moment to be found—young fellows fresh from well-deserved flogging at school, who would be first in a breach and would lead a cavalry charge against the deadliest artillery. Boys I'll find you who will fight to the death, and never do a dishonourable deed. That's the heroic gentleman. That's the male flower of the English folk. Well, what's the female flower of the English folk? Why, the poetic lady, the woman who is what our great poets imagined. Could Spenser and Shakespeare have conceived their Una and Rosalind if such lovable creatures had not existed? No. Have you not met the poetic lady—the flower of English life, whose every word is music, whose every look is light, whose every touch is love? This is the perfection of womanhood. Hera the ruler, Artemis the thinker, Aphrodite the lover, blended in one. This is the sort of wife for a man, the sort of queen for a world.

In another place, talking of solitude, he says,—

Night-watches are good for the restless spirit of man. You are face to face, nothing to disturb, with the most marvellous and inexplicable works of God. No wonder the Chaldean shepherds were astronomers, seeing how close seemed the stars during their long solitary nights. Also, when you are so close to the Creator, you get a new and special introduction to yourself; you are not the same man among your jolly

comrades over the wine as when you are absolutely alone upon a windy hill, with nothing between yourself and God.

And again, on a subject on which he always wrote strongly, he says,—

This very rational generation laughs at all things superstitious, and has adopted a creed called Positivism (being uniquely negative), which is only explicable on the assumption that the world is a vast machine that has no motive power and no owner. Many difficulties arise in connexion with this theory, but they are quietly ignored.

And in speaking of the sea he says,—

All sea-born and sea-dwelling folk are superstitious. No wonder; for the eternal life of the sea and its glorious loveliness ennoble and vivify the imagination.

Its measured motion reminds the voyager of God's presence. Its illimitable solitude reminds the voyager that he is in God's hand. Neither of these thoughts seems to come so forcibly in crowded towns, or even in wild country.

The following letter was written at about this date to Charles Blackburn, whom Mortimer always addressed as Ravensbourne.—

Knowl Hill,

Friday.

MY DEAR RAVENSBOURNE,—Not hearing that you had

fled to Exeter until I saw it in the columns of *Notes and Queries*, I was wondering what might be your last aberration . . . or transmigration. Walking through Minster Street one day with intent to make you drink some ale at Pontin's, I beheld drapers in the window once sacred to books. The vanishing of Aladdin's palace was nothing to it.

Your circular is capital. You should advertise in the *Athenæum*—

“Wanted, an eccentric nobleman with an uncatalogued library . . .”

As to the Latin, Martial says,—

Difficilis, facilis, jucundus, ascerbus es idem :

Nec tecum possum vivere, nec sine te.

I daresay you know Addison's translation :—

In all thy humours, whether grave or mellow,
Thou'rt such a touchy, testy, pleasant fellow,
Hast so much wit and mirth and spleen about thee,
That there's no living with thee, or without thee.

Send your notelet to every one who has a library.

M. C.

P.S.—As you are at Leeds to-day and were at Exeter yesterday, I shall not be surprised if you turn up here on a “bykykle” to-morrow.

Visitors to the cottage at Knowl Hill used to say that they caught the spirit of poetry there, so they often sent us letters in rhyme. One

young disciple of Mortimer's, who was familiarly called Jack, wrote a letter from which I quote two verses.

It has often seem'd to me
As I've started full of glee
From the station to the cottage at Knowl Hill,
That soft sunshine never glow'd
On as sweet a bit of road
As that on which fond memory lingers still.

But when on Monday morn
I took my way forlorn
From "Poet's Cot" to catch the early train,
I could not bear to see
Each gloomy flower and tree,
But that I hoped ere long to come again.

In reply to this Mortimer wrote the following lines on the 20th of July, 1873 :—

We are very glad, dear Jack,
That you like the Knowl Hill track
That leads you to the lawn beneath the limes,
Where the musical shy birds
Have a song more sweet than words,
Where we hope that we shall meet you many times.

And though going back again
May have a touch of pain,
And make the trees and flowers dull and grey,

Yet the calm for which you yearn
 Will very oft return,
 And shed a gleam of sunshine on your way.

M. AND F. C.

The next lines were written in August to
 Miss Louisa C.

The world requires a huge umbrella.
 We can't see you, we've lost our Ella;
 The critics all declare we grovel
 In themes too naughty for a novel.
 What can I do, a luckless sinner?
 Why drink some claret with my dinner;
 To-morrow perhaps a change of weather;
 Louisa and the sun together,
 They never can be long apart
 While there's a sunshine of the heart.

MORTIMER AND FRANCES.

The next letter is to Sir William Clayton
 of Harleyford, who sent a present of six
 dozen of Chambertin to Mortimer in August
 1873.

MY DEAR SIR WILLIAM,—When your wine
 Came suddenly [no gift sublimer]
 I thought of all the generous line
 Of those who deeming song divine,
 Loved to reward the rhymer.

I thought of King Ulysses, who,
 In Scheria's isle a tardy roamer,
 When verse rang sweet the palace through
 Knew just the proper thing to do,
 The story's told by Homer.

I thought of Horace, poet dear,
 Whose metres have mellifluous mintage,
 And how Mæcenas the Premier
 [Such ministers are rare I fear]
 Sent him his choicest vintage.

✓ In verse like theirs the Muse assures
 Me that I ought to write about it,
 But verse like theirs which long endures
 Is rare as friendliness like yours,
 So please to do without it.

Still, draw a cork. While good wine's rife
 One hearty wish will I deliver,
 That you and that your fair young wife
 May know all joy love gives to life
 By the imperial river.

Flow on, O Thames, by Harleyford!
 Kiss the green lawn, glide soft below it!
 Remember that the mansion's lord,
 Himself a poet, can afford
 Kind feelings towards a poet!

MORTIMER COLLINS.

The next letter, part of which I quote, is to
 Miss L. C.

Knowl Hill,

17th August.

“Yes, dear Louisa, you were miss’d to day;
I watch’d the church folk on their eastward way,
When the unmusical bell was sadly jangled,
And wonder’d whether illness had entangled
The only lady fair for whom I wait
To give and gain a welcome at my gate.

M. AND F.

The next is to thank Miss Louisa C. for mushrooms sent by her on the 29th of August.

“Argentum atque aurum facile est,” &c.

(Martial, xiii. 48.)

The Roman wit to whom I’m partial,
The epigrammatist hight Martial,
Declares that he could give away
His gold and silver any day,
Could spare a friend, if fairly built
About the legs, his choicest kilt,
But could not let a mushroom go,
They are too nice by far, you know.
I, who am fond of mushrooms too,
Rejoice in getting them from you;
A rarer flavour with them lingers,
Having been pick’d by your fair fingers.
They rise to greet you as you pass,
White discs amid the fresh green grass,
As flowers (by Homer we are told)
Sprang to greet goddesses of old.

The following verses which form an acrostic on the name of Louisa, were Miss L. C.'s birthday verses in 1873 :—

Linger awhile upon thy way,
 O Time ! for there is one at least,
 Under September's skies of gold,
 In whose sweet presence youth can stay,
 Sing like a minstrel at a Feast,
 And teach her never to grow old.

Let no one talk to her of age,
 Or hint that birthdays should not count ;
 Upward it is her gift to soar,
 It is but turning o'er the page,
 So shall her happy spirit mount
 A ladder of light to Heaven's fair shore.

MORTIMER AND FRANCES.

The next verses were to Miss L. C. when she left a seal at the cottage, on which was engraved the motto, *Le tems passe, mais l'amitié reste.*

2nd October, 1873.

Did you leave your seal, to seal
 My lips when I call you sweet,
 As my lawn-paths gladden to feel
 The tread of your nimble feet ?

O no ! it was left, that I
 May be told, in fair French phrase,
 Though Time, the churl, will fly,
 Louisa's friendship stays.

MORTIMER AND FRANCES.

In October, 1873, was published "Mr. Carington" [King and Co., Cornhill]. It was brought out under a feigned name, at the desire of the firm by which it was issued. There had been sharp attacks by critics on some of Mortimer Collins's former books—attacks which had the appearance of personal ill-feeling—and it was supposed that the book would be judged on its merits only if published under another name. But the author was easily known by his style. One paper—a popular daily—remarked that it was evidently a first essay at writing; and the author was recommended to practise a little more before producing another book.

This critic had evidently read only the title-page which showed a name unknown in literature—Robert Turner Cotton. The name was chosen from the author's wife's family, as his own family names of Branscombe and Mortimer were not considered a sufficient disguise. A few sentences quoted from it, will help to show his character.

Authors often unconsciously make the characters in their books something like themselves. Mortimer does this continually; and he often gives one side of his character to one person and

another to another, for he had many phases of character.

In "Mr. Carington" he describes Frank Noel, a school-boy, and his uncle, Canon Lovelace, and he puts something of his own character in both.

It was pleasant to the Canon to have this boy about him . . . a boy all extremes, full of spirits yet obedient, a cricketer and a dreamer, a lover of learning yet a dunce in school. The Canon, an habitual speculator as to human character, was puzzled by his nephew. There was something impenetrable about the youngster.

It was very pleasant for Frank when his uncle the Canon broke into one of his eloquent fits. There were times when some question of the day, some hideous wickedness, some imperial or republican rascality, kindled the phosphoric fire in Canon Lovelace's breast. Then the orator arose in his might, though his nephew was sole audience. Then the astonished but appreciating boy knew what fire and force an intense intellect can weld into words that look so pale upon the page. It was a grand part of Frank's education, even though he could not understand half his uncle's illusions, he was carried on by the rapid flow of his eloquence. When your boat descends a swift-flowing torrent, you get only an imperfect idea of the beauty of the region through which it races; still, a reflex of it remains on the retina, and comes back to you again with the hoarse music of the rapids. So it was with Frank. Long years after, fragments of the

Canon's inspired speech came back to him, and he understood them by the light of a matured brain, and he remembered the musical pulse of the unflagging sentences, to which the silvery fountain came as chorus.

This passage well describes Mortimer Collins himself when "some question of the day, some hideous wickedness, some imperial or republican rascality, kindled the phosphoric fire," in him. He would stand in his book-room with only his secretary for audience, and sometimes Miss Louisa C., and pour forth a torrent of eloquence in the most musical voice, his face often pale with enthusiasm. And it was on these occasions that he appeared at his best. He was contented with his listener or listeners, and had no ambition to give his opinions to the multitude. He seldom appeared at his best in company, in fact, it might be said he was then always at his worst.

In another part of "Mr. Carington" he makes a character express what was his own opinion.

I used to fancy that every year of life was a loss. I see it now, it is a gain—it is knowledge, it is power. Those who repine at growing old are those who have no true faith in the soul's immortality. Now I shall always thank God for every day that is given me.

recognition. It is quite possible to love

The following description of “ Mr. Carington ” is also a good picture of the author :—

The eye variable as the sea, the mouth fit for kiss or epigram, the fluent grace of movement, the delicate, flexible hand that was ready for rapier or rapture—you couldn't resist him.

Some writer, in giving a notice of Mortimer Collins at his death, spoke of “ the grace with which his pen flashed along the sparkling lines in strong contrast to the brawny fingers that wielded it.” But his hand was not brawny. It was a large, strong-looking, yet delicately moulded hand, and was certainly a key to his character.

Again in “ Mr. Carington ” he stops to talk of himself, which he often does in his books, and for which he has been much censured, he says,—

In my young days I have made many a tramp of many a mile through all weathers, from hottest sun to deepest snow. I have had comrades of many kinds : your road-fellow is almost as hard to choose as your bed-fellow. I have always sought adventures and usually found them. I am ready for the old game again . . . to go forth with little gold and much gaiety ; insatiably athirst for the glory and the honour of the world. Oh, they are inexhaustible ! There is

more beauty than I can ever estimate in that medlar-tree which, as I write, turns to colours for which no names can be coined. Turner could not paint that tree. Shakespeare could not thoroughly reflect the characters whom I may meet at the village shop or the village inn.

The medlar-tree was, and is probably, on the lawn at Knowl Hill, and was set there by Mortimer in 1862.

Again in "Mr. Carington" he makes allusion to himself. He says of Mr. Carington,—

He had that happy faculty of sound sleep which gives a man in his waking hours complete possession of all other faculties. People who cannot sleep well are never wide awake. Dip me in Lethe four hours of the twenty-four, and let me breathe pure oxygen the other twenty.

This was perhaps rather exaggerating his own powers, though he often did sleep only four hours; but his usual time of going to bed was two o'clock, and he rose about eight. He always gave one the impression of being so bright and fresh in the morning.

In another part of "Mr. Carington" the author stops, in his usual way, to deliver his opinion on some subject. This habit of the

author's stopping in his story to express his opinion in the first person is, no doubt, quite wrong, but there are many of us who cannot be angry with him for saying so many pretty things out of place. There may be people who would never dream of reading a three-volume novel, yet would care to read Mortimer Collins's works, for the thoughts and ideas so epigrammatically expressed and the sweet lyrics so carelessly scattered, and also so out of place in them. Writing on the bearing of man to woman, he says,—

I must, for my poor part, vote for the continuance of homage from man to woman; it is the natural deference of strength to beauty, of daring to purity, of glory to gaiety, of life to love. There is no creature more contemptible than the man who is rude to a woman.

In another place he again gives his readers his opinion:—

The best safeguard against being inveigled by men and women who are false, is to know those who are true. I fear I have more than once quoted that divine saying of Steele's concerning a lady, that "to love her was a liberal education;" but I doubt whether it can be quoted too often. To know a lady is to love her—is to learn from her—is to be refined by her; and I

am not at all afraid of my wife being jealous when I say that I love every lady I know. How they differ, these sparkling gems of ladyhood . . . and yet are all alike in being pure gems, the true *pelluciduli lapides*. One is a ruby of passion and power; another a sapphire of sky-tinted purity; another an emerald of poetic quietude; another a diamond of brilliancy and wit.

In another place the author expresses his opinion in this way:—

Trinity in unity (I write unprofanely) is the law of the world. Everywhere there are triads. The greatest triad of all is

God
|
Man—Woman.

The life of man is utterly empty unless he has God above him and woman with him.

Mortimer was always happy in his similes. There are many in "Mr. Carington," but the following is a very pretty one:—

Elinor's spirit was calm and serene in its movement . . . like the silent flight of some large, soft-winged bird passing from tree to tree in tranquil summer, while the Ravioli was by nature untameable as the wind, fretful as a wasp, restless as the darting dragon-fly. Yet, somehow, on this occasion Mr. Carington and Elinor seemed to have mesmerized her, even as he who hath the gift may mesmerize one of those swift

flashing dragon-flies till it lies in his palm as motionless as if it were dead.

I have seen Mortimer hold a large dragon-fly in his hand and stroke it. I mean one of those creatures known entomologically as *libellula*. I am told that dragon-fly is an incorrect term for them.

In another place the author says, or rather makes one of his characters say,—

Night, with its calm stars and magic moon is the time for work. Night for the poet and the orator: one touch of the glorious sun on green grass shames all their rhymes and periods.

In another place the author himself says,—

God has His way. Milton humorously makes the rebel angels, much bored during the absence of their Prince, on the first geographical exploration known to history, occupy their time in high reasonings

“Of Providence, foreknowledge, will, and fate;
Fix'd fate, free-will, foreknowledge absolute.”

That they “found no end, in wandering mazes lost,” is no matter for wonder, seeing they had just thrown away the clue. The question has disturbed men, as well as rebellious spirits, from time immemorial to time instant; the solution is intelligible only to those who understand that they are one with the Divinity.

Then a little farther on he quotes the following verse from his second canto of "The Inn of Strange Meetings," as yet unpublished.

Helen and I look out upon the west.
 O unimaginable sunset ! O
 Soft sky in mystic waves of colour drest,
 With great Apollo's final kiss aglow !
 O lights that lessen, linger, glisten, grow !
 L Almighty Artist, never do I see
 Thy little lightest touch of fire or snow,
 Of bird that sings, of blossom upon tree,
 Without that inner silent say : *I love thee.*

I should like to quote just a few more lines from "Mr. Carington." There may be some who would sympathize with the feeling contained in the following sentences :—

Elinor, who all this time had been silent, and who had an absurd respect for poets, not usual with young ladies, said, "Then must poets be miserable to make other people happy? How cruel! If I were rich, and knew the writer of a song like that you have sung, Marchesa, I would send him something unknown."

"Could a gentleman accept it?" said the Earl. "Could a gentleman refuse it?" echoed Elinor. "Do you mean to say that if a poet gives me pleasure which will last my life, I may not give him some slight pleasure in return? I would loyally kiss the man who

wrote a lovely song, if he would condescend to let my lips touch him."

The few sentences I have quoted from the book are those which I think give the best idea of the author's character and thoughts. But there are many pretty ideas, and much sweet poetry scattered through the three volumes. I think this was the first book in which "The Comedy of Dreams" is made to serve for mottoes to chapters, and it was continued through all successive books. The entire novel was written in two months; and during those eight weeks the regular newspaper work was continued as usual.

The following letter is to Miss L. C. just after the publication of "Mr. Carington," in October, 1873:—

October, 1873.

MY DEAR LOUISA,—Yours is a most charming criticism, and I believe in "Mr. Carington" all the more for it; and I hope that when you have reached its end you will think no worse of it than at present.

Your remarks as to the absence of anything "said, done, or nobly borne" by hero or heroine, is a subtle one, and perhaps greater interest with the general public might have been attained by putting Frank and Elinor through a severe course of suffering. But

in "Mr. Carington," I regard Frank, Elinor, Lucy, the Russian Prince, the Earl, &c., all as subsidiary characters. My idea is to make Mr. Carington the central figure—a man who by personal influence, cool courage, and a knowledge of human nature resting on long experience, controls or guides the course of events, not for his own advantage, but for that of others. And, though we are all born to trouble, I do not hold that to make trouble the main feature of a work of fiction is right in art.

There is more happiness than misery in life; if it were the reverse, the reason would be all the stronger for putting more happiness than misery in novels.

Yours,

ROBERT TURNER COTTON!!

At the end of October Mortimer Collins wrote in "Adversaria"—

The leaves of autumn are flying before rains and wind. They drive athwart my lawn a versicoloured shower. The copper-beech is burning its deepest russet, the Canadian oak is a tangled web of shivering saffron, soon the turf will be clear swept, to the weary gardener's high delight, and the eye's chief solace will be the glossy green of laurel and holly.

In November, 1873, Mortimer Collins again wrote a couple of original pieces for the "Penny Readings" at Knowl Hill, and read them himself. This was the last time he read to the

villagers. It is as well to explain the reason of this, as there will be constant allusion in his letters of 1874 to 1876 to a misunderstanding between himself and the Vicar of Knowl Hill, which seems to have arisen from the day when the "Penny Readings" took place.

Mr. Fairbairn, who had been Vicar for some years, and who had always been on very friendly terms with his somewhat eccentric parishioner, left Knowl Hill in the summer of 1873 for a neighbouring living, and a new Vicar was appointed, who commenced with great zeal to reform the parish. He was quite a young man — too young, perhaps, to appreciate the abilities of a man like Mortimer Collins. Whatever mistakes he made, no doubt he acted with the best intentions.

Mortimer took the trouble to write a couple of pieces which he thought would suit the villagers. One was on the loss of the "Captain;" the other was a long piece of 180 lines, taking for its text Shakespeare's "Seven Ages." It is in good "pedestrian verse," suited to the people for whom it was written, who are mostly agricultural folk. It cost the author several hours' work and thought; and it is to be re-

remembered that the man who wrote those lines for the amusement of his fellow-villagers was a man who had to make such a struggle for a living that he was unable to take holiday for eight years.

But this piece, which had been produced with so much care and with such good feeling, was condemned by the young Vicar, and Mortimer Collins was never again asked to help provide amusement for his neighbours; and the condemnation was because the words *sweethearts* and *kisses* were used.

Such an excess of zeal was no doubt well meant. I mention it simply because there are constant allusions henceforward to a misunderstanding which seems to have arisen from this time. The nature of the piece written and read by Mortimer Collins seems so to have shocked the moral sensibilities of the Vicar, that he from this time regarded his parishioner as a bad man.

The Vicar, no doubt, listened to gossip for the sake of finding out the characters of all his flock, that he might be the better prepared to work a reform amongst them. I am anxious to show that he did it all with good intentions, but the result was most lamentable. The

happy feeling that existed in the village during Mr. Fairbairn's care of it gradually disappeared, and the place was soon full of slanders and malicious stories. These things would not have disturbed the inmates of the Cottage, but that a dear friend of theirs was attacked.

This will account for the continual allusions to slander in Mortimer Collins's letters during the next two years.

The offending lines in the "Penny Reading" must be quoted, that the reader may form an opinion as to whether the condemnation was deserved.

The writer, after describing the first "Age," the infant, is next discoursing on the second, the school-boy, to which he joins the school-girl. He is telling what should be taught at schools, and he says,—

Then as to arithmetic, that should be taught
As if matters of buying and selling were nought,
Make tables of measures mere memory toil,
Teach principles only; like steel touch'd with oil
They cut for young minds a clear absolute way,
Striking straight through all puzzles as strikes the
sun's ray.

About needlework: ah, I must talk to my wife,
Without it there would be no pleasure in life;
She could say what I cannot of shirts and of smocks,

Of the broidery of frills, and the knitting of socks ;
But the work of the needle's a science, and I
Like to see it done easily. Fair to the eye
Is a pretty young girl with her needle and thread,
And over her lap her white handiwork spread,
And her little right hand flashing quick to and fro,
Such girls very quickly get sweethearts we know.

He then devotes eighteen lines to the third stage, the lover, and these were probably the lines that gave so much offence. Objection might be made to them, but they will seem innocent enough to many people :—

If we classify lovers we very soon find,
Though their customs may differ they're all of one
mind.

When matters go straight in the footpaths of life,
The girl wants a husband, the boy wants a wife ;
The example was set, as we well may believe,
By our brave old progenitors Adam and Eve ;
If young Lady Clara attracts her adorer,
When the magical dress of the ball-room is o'er her,
When rare flowers besprinkle her tresses superb,
When her eyes have no dullness, her wit has no curb,
Yet quite as much joy in her wooing has Jane,
Who meets her young man in the wood or the lane.
Lady Clara gets diamonds, sweet Jenny gets roses,
But both will get kisses the poet supposes ;
And no gem and no flower in the universe is
So delicious and dear as a true lover's kiss,

Only let it be true: flowers and diamonds are true,
Let kisses be also, ye young folks who woo.

If the poet was unwise in picturing the delights of courtship to the agricultural folk, he at any rate followed with some good advice:—

Gentle Shakespeare next gives us the soldier as type
Of a man in full manhood, his faculties ripe,
And thus far at least is the picture quite true,
That all men must be soldiers, whatever they do;
That life is a battle, that mind is a sword,
That the true man will triumph, the coward will be
floor'd.

Whatever your rank, do good work in the time
When the mind and the body are both at their prime:
There's a moment the central point of our life,
When they're equal—the handle and blade of the knife:
But matter grows faster and sooner decays,
While the spirit of man is immortal always.
In the high noon of life, in the fourth age of man,
Seek the bubble called fame wheresoever you can;
Your sword may be ledger or ploughshare or quill,
But with help both of body and mind and strong will,
Whether merchant you may be or farmer or poet,
Your sword will cut keen and the world will soon know
it.

On the day after the "Reading" at Knowl Hill School-rooms the following letter was sent to Miss Louisa C. :—

November, 1873.

Louisa says she's in a rage :

I wonder why.

We occupied the village stage,
She sang her song, I read my page ;
Which did it worst I won't engage,
I think 'twas I.

Louisa's anger has begun,

I know not wherefore.

Perhaps, after all, 'tis only fun,
But if some wicked deed I've done,
She'd not be in a rage with one
She did not care for.

MORTIMER AND FRANCES.

The next letter is to Miss L. C., to thank her
for some sleeve-links :—

December 10th, 1873.

I am glad I broke my links :

Your cool stones are prettier far—

Agates I suppose they are ?

Found where Eastern sunshine drinks
Mighty rivers famed of old,
Turning all their sands to gold.

Stones of such a quiet hue,

Set in silver pure and chaste,

On my wrist each morning placed,

Ought to make me think of you ;

And I hold, Louisa fair,

Such a thought is like a prayer.

Swiftly though the moments flit,
 Lapse of time can ne'er efface
 From my mind the faintest trace
 Of your wisdom and your wit :
 These indeed your poet thinks,
 Truly are Louisa's links.

MORTIMER AND FRANCES.

The last letter in 1873 which I shall give is to Miss L. C. on New Year's Eve. The *sox* means that Miss L. C. used to help the secretary knit socks for the poet, and *sixty-six* is the name of a game of cards that was sometimes played at the Cottage :—

New Year's Eve, 1873.

LOUISA,—As the moments flow
 Toward the Year that's new,
 I think what happiness we owe
 Through the old year to you :
 Of afternoons with chess and tea,
 And sox and sixty-six,
 And all your wise philosophy,
 And all your merry tricks.

What shall I wish next year to be ?
 A selfish wish, 'tis true . . .
 That you may be the same to me,
 And I the same to you ;
 That hither oft the way you'll find,
 Defiant of the weather,

That strong and subtle links may bind
Us all in love together.

I clipp'd two pigeon's wings to-day,
To make them plump and fat,
When will you come and eat them? Say . . .
I'm anxious about that.
And when I caught the pretty things,
And used the fatal shear,
I wish'd that I could clip your wings,
And keep you always here.

MORTIMER AND FRANCES.

CHAPTER VIII.

1874.

EARLY in 1874 was published “ Transmigration ” [Hurst and Blackett].

The preface to this book is perhaps worth quoting.

“ Writers of what have been called Utopian romances need not accuse their rivals of plagiarism, since they are all treading in the track of giants like Aristophanes and Swift. But it may be well to state that I had not read “ The Coming Race ” until these volumes were passing through the press, and that I have never seen *Erewhon*.

“ The idea of an experience of metempsychosis has dwelt in my mind since walking with one of England’s great poets on the terrace of Rydal Mount, in full sight of that ‘ aerial rock ’ which he loved to greet at morn and leave last at eventide, he answered an inquiry of mine with the immortal words on my title-page.”

It was, I think, in 1848 that Mortimer Collins met Wordsworth, and the lines alluded to are:—

Our birth is but a sleep and a forgetting ;
The soul that rises with us, our life's star,
Hath elsewhere had its setting,
And cometh from afar.

The author as usual gives his opinion on various subjects to the reader, or rather he makes his hero do it in this case, for the book is written entirely in the first person. He says in one place,—

“I say that the happiest time of a man's life is not when he obtains distinction as statesman, soldier, poet, what not; nor is it when he finds a comfortable balance lodged at his banker's, whereby he can snap his fingers at his creditors; but it is when two bright eyes look lovingly into his, and two sweet lips are ready to be kissed, and a warm, white hand rests trustfully in his. I am of opinion that we do not yet half understand the philosophy and psychology of sexual completion. Our modern sophists are so anxious to prove the non-existence of God and the monkey ancestry of man, that questions of real importance are forgotten. A universe self-created is far less imaginable than a creating Deity; a monkey made as a caricature of man is far more probable than the development of man from a monkey. The thing cannot be done.

But, O ye philosophers and students of life, there is room for great discovery in connexion with the higher nature of man. It is not our relation toward the beasts that perish which requires investigation; it is our

relation toward God, who created us in His own image. Just at this moment we have fallen on a time when sham science is rampant; when anything new is accepted by all the shallow, thoughtless people whose minds have no real culture. The man who argues that we are mere developments of the lower creatures finds hosts of admirers; his books pass through many editions; his miserable misrepresentations of nature are accepted as absolute truth by persons who have never observed nature. "The Divinity is an ape, and behold! I am his prophet," is one man's cry. Logic works no cure; fallacy is the fashion, and with the multitude fashion is stronger than either revelation or reason.

In another place, speaking of Love he says,—

Laugh if you will, you who cannot understand love in its purity, love that is beyond passion and appetite, as the star is beyond the fire, love that can flourish without words, without kisses, without anything but the magnetic interpenetration of two spirits that have become one.

In another place he thus describes one of his characters :—

He thought money compensated all things. He regarded it as the common measure of human affairs. If a girl whom he liked had lost her father or mother, he would try to console her with a costly bracelet. You

cannot get this fixed idea out of some men. You cannot teach them that it is absolutely impossible to buy the song of a mavis or of a poet . . . the love of a girl or of a dog. These are things beyond gold.

And again the author says,—

Although there is sex in souls, there is no age; if there were, the soul could not be immortal. That which grows old, dies.

There may be nothing remarkable in all these little sayings, but they make one pause to *think*, and it is not every novel writer that can make his readers think.

In the second volume the hero relates his adventures in the planet Mars. He describes a man he met there; and those who were his most intimate friends will at once see how the description fitted Mortimer Collins himself.

The last words he uttered with a deep gravity, as if to cling to the idea of God was the central thought in his mind; and thus indeed I found it when we became friends. It was one delight—the conscious feeling of a present God. It saved him from all cynicism, from all dissatisfaction. The song of a bird, the beauty of a sunset, the laugh of a girl, were all divine gifts to him—he intensified the enjoyment of life by always remembering the Giver of that enjoyment. Pen, ink, and paper fail to make what I mean intelligible. You

could not be in that man's company without feeling that he was never alone.

And he again pictures himself where he describes this same man who—

Would put his long white hand in the water, lo, a fish would come at once to greet it, acknowledging some strange magnetic mystery in the man. The birds sang more sweetly as he passed beneath the trees . . . His faith in the kindness of God had perpetual reward.

In another place the author describes the three different kinds of love.

There is passion: the royal strong irresistible unquenchable passion which conquers all obstacles, being the divine desire and resolve of a man who has seen the only woman in the world that can satisfy him. That passion I have known; not to have known it is not to have lived. There is appetite, the erotic fancy; the liking (I cannot strictly call it *love*) which grows out of a woman's being pretty to look upon. This is merely contemptible. Thirdly, there is what has been called the Platonic affection. It deserves clearer definition, and I am not sure it does not deserve cultivation. It is the magnetism of the mind. There is no wretched wantonness about it.

This last form of intercourse rests on a definite scientific basis. *There is a sex in souls.* This admitted, men and women can meet each other on

intelligible terms. Why should mere physical ideas trouble and untranquillize the brain of creatures capable of such infinite capacities as ours?

* * * * *

Women were not designed to be mere physical comrades of men; they were also meant to be their intellectual and poetical associates. -

In another place the author again touches on this relation between man and woman, and I am anxious to show what were his opinions on the subject because he illustrated them so completely in his own life in his relations with women. In a world where there are so many censorious people, he could not escape without blame for his friendships with the other sex. Many people doubt the possibility of what is called *Platonic* love between the sexes, and a relation of one of the ladies whom Mortimer loved in true friendly fashion, wrote to him to point out the impropriety of his addressing the lady by her Christian name. Perhaps there was some fascination to Mortimer Collins in a friendship with a woman, because he had no sister. Whatever it was his friendship was as true as his love, and the ladies who were his friends were above reproach. They knew how to accept his sweet courtesy in the spirit in

which it was offered, and no doubt they helped him to form the high conception of women which he shows in all his later works.

The relation between brother and sister is very useful, and therefore, like all useful things, very beautiful. A sister may teach a brother many valuable lessons in the fashion and fantasy of life; a brother may teach his sister what it is that men adore in women. What is it? Caprice, beauty, wit, grace, temper? No, these are, in all perfection, delicious; but what a man adores in a woman is that ideal innocence, that sweet chastity of spirit, which he knows for himself unattainable. And, if happy enough to achieve the marriage of completion, he knows that one half of him is pure. The dearer half of him lives in the realm of light. He must perforce grope in the twilight of the world sometimes, but she need never forsake that calm abode of clarity in which she was predestined to dwell.

In another place in "Transmigration," on the subject of women, the author breaks into verse, which he could not help doing in his happiest moods, and gives us the following sonnet:—

A woman who is light from heart to eye,
A woman who is love from eye to heart;
That is true beauty. Ah, on life's rough chart
Mark down the place of meeting ere you die,

If you have met such woman. Never sigh
If she desire you to dwell far apart :
Just to have made a vein of anger start
In her strong soul is something. Ah, but why
Is it that such a woman seldom sees .
The man of calm imaginative brain,
The man who loves the birds and flowers and trees,
Who fathoms pleasure and finds power in pain ?
One glance, one grasp, would make one flesh of these,
Yet go they wandering round the world in vain.

Again in describing a lady in "Transmigration," he gives her the power he had himself:—

Not creatures only, but the very flowers seemed to know her: the robin was more familiar than with any one else, the shy-eyed wren stole near her unstartled, the dragon-fly lay on a leaf while she stroked it with velvet fingers: she could handle bees unstung, and any flower she tended gave far fairer bloom than those left to the old gardener's watering-pot.

In another place the following remark is made:—

We are told that youth is a blunder, manhood a struggle, old age a regret. Pshaw! Youth is a lyric, manhood an epic, age a philosophy. Youth is prophecy, manhood fruition, age is vision of both past and future.

The following letter to Miss L.C. was probably written early in 1874.

DEAR LOUISA,—Won't you look in for the infinitesimal fraction of a minute to-morrow? It would be charity, and charity, as the proverb says, covers Louisa. Bring a double handful of your own special sunshine with you. At any rate we are safe for Monday.

A very clever artist, with a very despondent temper, used to come and see me here. His last visit was about 1869. There is a capital large-sized photograph of him hanging in our dining-room. He has just broken out into verse in praise of Frances, and I send you the paper wherein it appears. There is too much scansion in the rhythm, but the thought is good. Frances, never having been sonnetteered in print except by me, says she feels as if

M and F. C.

The last phrase in this letter, "feels as if . . ." was a familiar one at the Cottage.

There were the usual number of Valentines written in 1874, and although they are mere nonsense, they are elegant nonsense, and I cannot help thinking that they may interest many people. They present to one the picture of a man who was struggling hard and seriously for a

living, finding time to say something sweet, and pretty to his friends, thereby helping to make their life pleasant.

The first is to an Irish lady, who was on her way to Naples. It is written, as were nearly all the letters to her, in the metre of the "Groves of Blarney." "Wiggs" in the second verse was our Skye terrier Fido, of whom Ella was fond. The "Seraph" in the fourth verse was an allusion to a joke between Mortimer Collins and herself, which would be understood by any one who has read Mortimer's novel "Sweet Anne Page."

Oh, the Bay of Naples !
It is so charming,
With its sparkling water,
 And its lovely air.
And its Mount Vesuvius,
Oh, it's quite alarming !
Since Ireland's daughter
 Has been staying there.

At Knowl Hill it freezes,
And the Missus wheezes,
And the Master squeezes
 Close by the fire.

And Wiggs is snarling
 And the Big'un darling
 Doth very meekly
 To his chair retire.

My shamrock sweetheart,
 Who has the neat art
 Of by instinct knowing
 What needs are mine,
 Is southward going
 In search of splendour,
 And so I send her
 A Valentine.

A mountain burning,
 A strange wild yearning,
 At every turning
 A picture queer.
 Now what sings Ella
 For a ritornella,
 "Suppose a seraph
 Should meet me here."

A natural notion,
 By waves in motion
 And airy coolness
 On the sea astir.
 But Ella ponders
 For awhile, and wonders
 If 'twould meet approval
 From

The next are two sisters, Misses M. A. and C. S., who had just taken a house together near Warwick. They went into their new house on Valentine's Day, and found their Valentines as a greeting.

To Miss M. A. S.

So settled in the old historic,
Stout sturdy central shire of Warwick
Annie and Clara live together,
And ask us there in fair spring weather.
Glad will we come if Fate will let us,
Glad are we that you don't forget us,
And you'll forgive me, sweetheart mine,
For writing you a Valentine.

Old Valentine, an amorous saint,
Who suffer'd from a love-complaint,
Puts many folks in a quandary,
When they write rhymes in February ;
Not you and me, since well we know
How near to come, how far to go :
What sweet spring blossoms to entwine
Around the brow of Valentine.

To Warwick now I send a wish up
By Valentine, the saint and bishop.
May you be always just as gay
As I have seen you every day,

May hunters give you many a mount,
Delighted on their own account ;
And on your hundredth birthday party,
May I dance with you sound and hearty.

M. C.

The ladies were both famous for their riding, and often followed the hounds. Miss M. A. S. had once said she hoped to live to be a hundred, and that she should give a party on her hundredth birthday. Mortimer Collins, who was many years older, said he hoped to be at the party, and he often reminded her of it. Miss C. S. had written to say they were rather nervous about burglars, but they hoped their groom and collie dog would protect them.

CLARA ! Saint Valentine
Lovingly greets you ;
Are you afraid of thieves
When underneath the eaves
Sparrows and starlings
Their love stories gurgle ?
Do you expect to see
Some fellow (not like me)
Coming to burgle ?

Clara ! Saint Valentine
Hereby entreats you,

If when you go to bed
 Thieves you would never dread
 [Send all the housebreakers
 Straight to Old Harry].
 There is an easy way,
 This is the proper day,
 Marry, child, marry.

The next Valentine is to Mrs. J. V. :—

DEAR MRS. V.,—May I say
 A word or two of nonsense just to-day?
 Saint Valentine *will* take my wits away.

Yes, the sap rises and the spring grows fair,
 And rich bird music fills the amorous air,
 And there is perfect beauty everywhere.

You are in London—in the Strand I know,
 Yet your quick brain will never find things slow,
 And spring goes with you wheresoe'er you go.

Your touch turns every meanest thing to gold,
 Your heart's so warm that winter can't be cold,
 Your brains so young that none you love grow old.

The next is to Mrs. George S. :—

DEAR JOSEPHINE,—My love I sent
 "By George"—now was it right?
 I fear he thought me impudent,
 And didn't see it quite.

And yet by all the flowers below
And all the stars above,
I think I have a right to show
To you my love.

For who can see a lady sweet
Serenely sweet like you,
Without attempting to repeat
Old sayings always true ?
Your picture in my brain has slept
Since dear old days divine,
So, Josephine, do please accept
My Valentine.

The next is to a friend of Mortimer Collins's:—

The joyous thrush begins to sing,
The frost has fled away,
Saint Valentine is wandering
Through wood and field to-day :
Blue violets with fragrance faint
Welcome the footstep of the saint.

We may grow old, but never cold—
Such fate is yours and mine :
Though troubles come, though years are told,
We'll hail Saint Valentine,
That prelate of the primrose weather
Who brings the boys and girls together.

While bright thoughts fade, bright hopes grow vain :
One thing your poet knows is,

We shall be boy and girl again
 In some metempsychosis.
 I wonder where, O Mistress mine !
 We next shall meet Saint Valen ti n e.

Early in 1874 Mortimer Collins was asked to write short articles for the *Daily Recorder*, a financial and commercial paper, published in the City.

Commercial and financial subjects would seem to people who knew Mortimer to be quite foreign to him ; but he never made a difficulty of anything. He wrote the articles, and perhaps the only fault in them was that they were too good. They were the very poetry of commerce and finance—Mincing Lane and the Stock Exchange in epigram ; and the views expressed in them may not be altogether Utopian, for though he could not manage his own affairs, he had sound ideas on political economy. His contributions only continued for a few months, as there was a change in the management of the paper. He had been asked to write by a friend who knew his versatile powers, and was glad to put anything in his way. I have mentioned his contributions to this paper because I imagine that many people

would suppose that a man whose life was so entirely enveloped in poetry could not understand matters commercial or financial. I should like to quote one of the articles wherein he originates an idea concerning the City Companies, which if carried out would, perhaps, produce noble and useful results. By this I am reminded that he very often started ideas which other journalists took up, and which were in some cases worked to good purpose. There are many other ideas scattered over his works which can scarcely be recognized yet; and far-seeing people will acknowledge that notwithstanding his "effete Toryism," as a critic called it, he was in some things much before his time.

The following is part of his article on a University of Commerce. The article was called "Trade Union, True and False," and was published in February, 1874:—

It is, perhaps, worth while to say a word on the principle of Trade Union. That principle is nothing new. It is, in its higher form, a very noble and useful principle. But, as the Latin adage says, *corruptio optimi pessima*—the better a thing is the worse it grows by corruption; and such Trade Union as that of the three thousand coal-miners, who expect to get

higher wages by working thirty-two hours a week than if they worked twice that time, is of course utterly abominable. But the Trade Union recognized centuries ago by the City Companies ought not to fall into desuetude. Nine hundred years ago some of these great commercial guilds existed. The Plantagenet kings wisely encouraged the ancient English tradition. The principal City Companies now in existence are twelve:—

	A.D.
Clothworkers'	1482
Drapers'	1439
Fishmongers'	1433
✓ Goldsmiths'	1327
✓ Grocers'	1346
Haberdashers'	1407
Ironmongers'	1463
✓ Mercers'	1394
Merchant Taylors'	1466
Salters'	1530
✓ Skinners'	1327-
Vintners'	1365

What actual work they do at this moment we will not too curiously inquire, nor need we ask whether every member of the Company of Drapers or Goldsmiths is initiated in the art and mystery which they profess. Let it suffice to say that they are wealthy and influential, that they are ancient institutions capable of modern development as yet incalculable. It is a maxim of sound politics never to search for a new instrument when there is an old one that will do the work. These

great City Companies had three special objects:—(1) To maintain freedom of trade against all attack; (2) To maintain honour among merchants; (3) To train young men in the business which they adopted. Could not the City of London renew this immemorial organization? Could not the Twelve great Companies be united into a University of Commerce? When rash revolutionists all through England are trying to bring on a period of high prices and idleness, could not the chief commercial city in the world use its existing organization to secure cheapness by the aid of industry? We have our merchant princes; we have our ancient guilds—surely it would be easy to form a great combination that would do infinite good. The power of the City of London is no trifle. Far smaller cities—like Tyre, and Carthage, and Venice—have, by sheer commercial genius, become great forces in the world, without any national strength to back them. But London has England behind—has India, and Australia, and Canada behind. London is, in fact, the greatest civic power ever known; and we want to see it utilized.

Trade is an honourable vocation. It is the occupation of many gentlemen of the highest character and standing. If this were more completely and generally recognized it would be a great benefit. We are all working men, if we are worth anything, and the working men who follow Odger seldom do much real work. Now, if skilled work were known to be a classic achievement, how much would be done to keep bad workmen from swindling the public! If the Twelve great Companies could be induced to unite, and form a

Civic University, with a staff of professors and a definite system of granting degrees, the ennobling influence on English trade would be enormous. This is no ideal Utopia. We hope to hear more of it. Would not the Ironmongers' Company make a Senior Wrangler of Albert Durer, or the Goldsmiths of Benvenuto Cellini?

The records of sales in the *Daily Recorder* much amused our poet. He did not understand what half the things were, but he did not rest satisfied until he found out. I want to quote a paragraph written at this time for another paper, to show how his mind worked, and how he never allowed anything to pass him without finding its meaning. It is from the *Press and St. James's Chronicle* that I quote the following:—

This is an age in which the impossibility of omniscience is forced upon one at every step. How little does the frequenter of Piccadilly know what goes on in Mincing-lane! I take up a financial journal, the *Daily Recorder*, which you won't see at White's or Brookes's, and I find that somebody has for sale—“Ostrich feathers, 50 cases, 5 parcels; vulture ditto, 4 ditto; osprey ditto, 67 ditto; peacock ditto, 6 ditto; bird skins, 36 packages various, 28,284 jay, 12,021 kingfisher, 1,696 magpie; pheasants, 179 Impeyan, 5 Argus: birds of Paradise, 501; butterflies, 12 boxes; beetles, 22,940.” *Vulture* feathers! O ladies of

fashion, how do you expect to look in the plumage of those carrion-loving birds? Twenty-eight thousand jays have been killed for a single day's sale; and twelve thousand king-fishers, that cross a stream like a flash of rainbow. And what beauty is lost in twelve boxes of butterflies! As to the twenty-thousand beetles—why, if you like such decorations, I don't grumble. Have your own way. Martial tells us Glaucilla liked to wear around her neck a living snake. Is that sort of boa sold by auction in Billiter Street and Mincing Lane?

Now look at this, and explain, if you can, dear reader:—"Shellac, 57 cases; myrabolanes, 915 bags; Japan wax, 200 cases; Cape Argol, 10 bags; logwood, 32 tons Jamaica; ebony, 10 ditto Ceylon; red sanderswood, 30 ditto; fustic, 10 ditto, munjeet, 10 bales; gum olibanum, 15 cases; plumbago, 60 barrels." Mysterious! What *is* munjeet? Madder root, from *Rubia cordifolia*, used as a red dye. Myrabolanes? Well, they are the unripe fruit of *Terminalia citrina*, and yield a black dye. Fustic comes into the same category.

But what in the world, I asked myself, is a Penang lawyer, when I saw that somebody had ten thousand to sell? Are there not lawyers enough at Westminster that ten thousand from Penang should be on sale in the City? I refer. The Penang lawyer is a walking-stick made from the *Licuala acutifoila*. In Penang, I presume, a lawsuit is settled with a stick. The method has its advantage. I am told these sticks average six and eightpence each."

The following lines were written to a lady in March, 1874:—

LADY L——,—What has become of you ?

Up a tree are you. Down a well ?

Staying away so long is glum of you,

Where does your Highness and Prettiness dwell.

Don't you know that your voice is dear to us,

Sweeter far than the lark in the sky ?

Why in the world you don't come near to us,

We are wondering, Frances and I.

Every eventide, waiting wearily,

Till the sun to the westward dips,

Frances tells me, laughing cheerily,

“O, she will come when she's mended her lips.”

Really we don't commit any perjury,

Saying we've miss'd you quite a year ;

If your lips require some surgery

Come, and we'll try to mend them here.

MORTIMER AND FRANCES.

On the 7th of April he received a letter in verse from Dr. Steele, part of which is worth quoting, as showing the friendship between them. The character of Dr. Sterne in “Squire Silchester's Whim” was said to represent Dr. Steele. “The Boy Waits” was the title of a

book by Mortimer Granville, a cousin of Mortimer Collins :—

So Gladstone has met with his Moscow,
And Ben's the new "Tenant at Will,"
Doctor Sterne's in the city of Roscoe,
Squire Silchester's down at Knowl Hill.

* * * * *

Hast anything new on the anvil,
Prose idyll or rhymed epopee?
"The boy waits" for Mortimer Granville,
But England for Mortimer C. I
How rejuvenescent's the season,
How nature with energy's rife,
How fresh as from cauldron of Æson,
Leaps Mortimer's genius to life!
To pulsating, passionate life.

Megalopolis hails me to-morrow,
Knowl Hill shall receive me—ah when?
Oh! would I were vagrant as Borrow,
Nor bound 'neath the thrall of the pen,
I would hie me to Paddington Station
[Pray pardon these common-place rhymes]
And in twice sixty minutes duration,
I'd be standing 'neath Mortimer's limes,
Those murmurous musical limes!

Early in April he and his secretary spent four days in London. It was the longest period they had been absent from the Cottage

since 1868. On the few occasions that they left home work was always carried with them; and when Mortimer Collins retired for the night, he would, as usual, sit down to work while his secretary slept. The following was written on the night of the first day in town:—

Half-past one o'clock, ante meridian.

April 9, 1874.

[Isn't that the biggest date that ever grew on a palm?]

Grosvenor Crescent, S.W.

Frances is fast asleep, dear Louisa, and I, after dinner and talk, have been scribbling for coin: but she and I both want to say a word to you. How do I know it, when she's asleep?

I have met a brace of poets to-day: we had kettle-drum with my friend Fred Locker, and at dinner there was Matthew Arnold, with whom I had corresponded, but had not met him. He looks much younger than he is. He is an Inspector of Schools—enough to spoil any man, let alone a poet. Mrs. Senior (sister of "Tom Brown," who didn't appear) is very charming, though she found my Toryism too high flavoured. Sir Charles T—— is a glorious old boy; we got into intense friendship over Homer. He quotes the Greek *or erotundo*, and is in love (as I am) with Nausikaa, the type of all perfect ladies like . . . (guess whom, in six letters).

People go to bed too early in these degenerate days.

MORTIMER AND FRANCES.

The next letter was written to Miss L. C. on Mortimer Collins's return from London.

Knowl Hill,

April 11, 1874.

LADY LOUISA,—We are back again,
Have had our share of pleasure and of pain,
And long for you. Don't let us long in vain.

We've met some friends and probably some foes ;
We've had to wear our werry bestest clo's,
Whether we've done some good—well! goodness
knows.

I want to tell you how we went to munch
A very jolly gossip-laden lunch
With the most recent editor of *Punch*.

He's a good fellow ; brilliant ; void of vanity ;
✓ Pictures and china are his chief insanity ;
But he is full of humour and humanity.

Others there are But can I write in rhyme ?
Really, Louisa, I have not got time.
Who, after railway travel is sublime ?

Now tell me, must we wait for you till Monday ?
Can't you on this occasion spare us one day ?
It isn't wicked to be kind on Sunday.

MORTIMER AND FRANCES.

The next verses were written to Miss L. C.,
to thank her for some silk socks which were
knitted in two shades of delicate colour.

April 17, 1874.

Your lovely silken socks, Louisa fair,
 Are better than a poet ought to wear.
 Especially a poet whom the Parson
 Would set on fire, and deem it lawful arson.

This colour suits sweet April that advances
 Over the fields (a thought I owe to Frances),
 For the two tints are those the April showers
 Develop in the laughing cuckoo-flowers.

* * * * *

No : they are sacred to calm eventide,
 When lilac odours through the windows glide,
 And, as the amorous nightingale sings clear,
 We long Louisa's sweeter voice to hear.

MORTIMER AND FRANCES.

About this time Mortimer Collins, writing
 on social position, says,—

I don't believe that the man who is artist or poet,
 pure and simple, thinks about his social position.
 Conscious that he possesses a gift which has a value
 quite apart and different from that of rank or wealth,
 he is perhaps too apt to have an unreasoning contempt
 for peers and millionaires.

In April, 1874, Miss L. C.'s father died, and
 the event is alluded to in the following letter :—

April, 1874.

I feel reluctant to write to you, dear Louisa, lest I
 should seem to intrude on the sacredness of your great

sorrow ; but I cannot help telling you that Frances and I think of you always, and long to know how you are. I had written you, on Tuesday evening, a brief account of my day at Wokingham ; but when on Wednesday morning I heard the bell toll, I felt sure the time had come. No one here knew what had happened ; so I walked to your lodge, and heard the news, and returned, saddened by the thought of your sadness. But I have kept the letter for you to read some day.

It is impossible to say how much we miss you,

MOETIMER AND FRANCES.

Some few days after this the following verses were sent by Mortimer Collins to Miss L. C. :—

April 24, 1874.

Why should we grieve for one who has departed,
 After long years of honour and renown—
 After a life, strong, simple, noble-hearted,
 Peacefully passing to receive his crown ?

He had seen three successive generations,
 Entering the century in his brilliant youth ;
 Lived through a hundred tumults of the nations,
 Kept his firm course of equity and truth.

Him now doth One who loves His children gather
 Forth from this orb of transient joy and pain :
 Your venerable father meets his Father,
 And in the light of God is young again.

These verses gave great pleasure to Mrs. C., who remarked that she was astonished that Mortimer Collins, having seen so little of her husband, should have judged his character so well.

The blackbird alluded to in the following letter was the favourite that built year after year in the garden of the Cottage.

May, 1874.

I am very glad, dear Louisa, that your mother and you liked the lines. There is no doubt that insight into character is a necessary part of the poetic faculty, though I don't pretend to say I have it. You get in Shakespeare's Histories better ideas of men like John, Henry V., Henry VIII., Wolsey, than any historian can give; and so a great poetic portrait painter like Titian or Reynolds reveals the men and women he paints as perhaps they could never reveal themselves.

A blackbird awoke Frances at half-past three this morning, and sang on till about ten minutes past four, when he went to breakfast. "Early birds . . . &c." He has been singing almost all day. Mrs. B. has her nest in a laurel-fork under the limes, and looks at us shyly as we loiter up and down in this loitering weather. Your gentianella is so deliciously blue just now—like a Mediterranean sky.

I enclose a sheet from the *Press*, thinking you might like to see the first paragraph of "Adversaria."

Please let me have it again, as Frances wants to "stick it in."

I had a note from Tom Taylor to-day, imploring me to write *prose* for *Punch*, instead of verse. There will be a lot of my verse next Wednesday, but they pine for prose. What is an "aged poetaster" (as one of my critics called me) to do in such a case? Saunter about the grass till I get humorous inspiration, I suppose.

If you would like my verses put in the *Reading Mercury*, I shall be very glad to see my name connected in the slightest way with your father's. Frances is going to write a line thereon, as she says she understands it all better than I do . . . which is quite true.

I don't wonder at your yearning to be a child again—I often do. *But I look forward with great delight to another childhood.*

Ever yours,

MORTIMER AND FRANCES.

The last sentence in this letter reminds me that Mortimer had such an utter fearlessness of death. He always spoke of it as something to look forward to with pleasure, and he had the power of making any one who was much with him feel the same thing; yet it was not from any weariness of life, for no man ever had a keener enjoyment of it. He had an almost marvellous power of enjoyment, and he was not only happy himself, but he made every one

about him happy. He put poetry into the most commonplace affairs. He seemed to make life so easy, and yet he took such infinite trouble with every little thing. I can hardly say that he took *trouble*, because he never seemed to make anything a trouble; but he thought nothing beneath consideration, and he would be as much interested in the affairs of some poor neighbour who came to him for advice as he would be over the affairs of the nation, the latter being in a manner his business.

The next is to Miss M. A. S., and was probably written in May.

Knowl Hill,

Thursday.

DEAREST ANNIE,—“Yours to hand,” as tradespeople say. The notes shall be sent on. The mistress has the greatest dislike to moving, especially at a holiday time, when all the world is on the rail; but, if the rest of your party comes, I hope she will do likewise. I should like her to see you comfortably settled in Warwickshire, which is the county I like best after Devon.

Don't you go and spoil that big boy with bread and cheese and beer. By the way, do you buy Flower's ale, of Stratford-on-Avon? It's about the best in

England, and he is one of the best of fellows—as rich as a prince, and twice as generous. Fancy your mistaking a carpet-stretcher for a spud! Why it's as bad as the Scotch song—

“Our gudeman came hame at e'en.”

You'll be mistaking Warwick Castle for a lunatic asylum next.

I am glad to hear you cook so well, and will bring my Sunday appetite.

Ever yours and Clara's,
M. AND F. C.

At Whitsuntide, in 1874, Mortimer Collins and his secretary and “Big Dog” spent a few days with the Misses S., near Warwick. The following letter was written on coming home again:—

Knowl Hill,

Saturday.

DEAREST ANNIE AND CLARA,—I should have written yesterday to say how heartily we enjoyed our visit, but that I had a lot of business on hand and couldn't find time. We did enjoy it—that's a fact. How could it be otherwise, when I have learnt to dance from Clara, and have disjoined the noses of Mr. C. and Mr. B.

* * * * *

You know the short poem the hermit of Poohl-Kotee made on the spur of the moment. I hope it scratched him.

Collins and C . . . d,
How little they differ'd,
Both being wholly
In love with Miss S y.

He didn't say which, so he probably means both.

Whitsuntide at Budbrooke will always be a pleasant reminiscence to us both. I only wish it was just the other side of Knowl Hill, so that I could step across and see you now and then. Big Dog sends his love to Rover.

Yours affectionately,
MORTIMER AND FRANCES.

The gossip in the village of Knowl Hill and the neighbourhood, to which I have before alluded, had now become so bad as seriously to annoy the most welcome visitor to the Cottage. But Mortimer Collins in his usual buoyant way, tried to laugh away the annoyance, as will be seen in the subjoined verses. The love of gossip spreads like a disease, and the whole neighbourhood seems to have become infected with it. A public man like Mortimer Collins, making his living in an unusual way and being eccentric in his habits, is sure to be a theme for gossip where gossip reigns. Even what he ate and drank seemed to interest the scandal-mongers; and a

lawsuit with which he was troubled at this time was quite a delicious morsel to them.

What was once a happy and peaceful village, was now becoming a hotbed of malice and hatred and mischief engendered by gossip. The following lines were written in June :—

June 2, 1874.

LOUISA, ever kind to us,
 We've eaten your asparagus,
 And thought it really charming :
 But do you not begin to find
 'Tis rather dangerous to be kind
 To people so alarming ?

What Somebody to Some one said,
 With awful shake of solemn head
 Is always so momentous.
 Ah, me ! the world has moral ends
 From loving and from serving friends
 'Tis anxious to prevent us.

Now poet Nobody maintains,
 He does not envy Some one's brains,
 Or Somebody's grand dinners.
 His presence all the county taints :
 Alas ! in Berkshire, Land of Saints,
 No shelter for two sinners !

By County cad and City knave,
 Who furtive sneer or savage rave,

The Poet may be slander'd :
 Louisa will not strike her flag
 While there's a single radiant rag
 To flutter from the standard.

“The pity of it !”—Shakespeare's words—
 The pity these bucolic herds
 Can't gore each other's haunches,
 But must go bellowing everywhere,
 Because a Lady true and fair
 To friends in trouble staunch is.

O, by the Lord of Love and Light,
 If fond of despicable spite,
 Why can't they go to Hades ?
 There they might all like serpents hiss,
 And leave a lovely world like this
 To gentlemen and ladies.

MORTIMER AND FRANCES.

There were often merry evenings at the Cottage when there were visitors, and nonsensical verses were written for “Knowl Hill Rhymes.” Every one present was expected to help with a line or a verse occasionally.

The young ladies who lived near Warwick had started a book in imitation of that one at the Cottage, and as Mortimer Collins had christened their house the “Doll's House,” they called it “Doll's House Ditties.” One evening

in June some nonsense was written to them,
part of which I quote:—

DEAR ANNIE AND CLARA, both pretty and witty,
You've started a Doll's-house, we send you a ditty.
There are three of us here, and midnight advances,
The poet, the seaman, and indolent Frances.

* * * * *

Our gallant young sailor is tearing his hair,
As we tell him of Budbrooke he'd like to be there.
In polka and dance he declares he'd be first,
And for Warwickshire ale he's a wonderful thirst;
C—d couldn't outdo him, although he may call
Twice a day for his tankard, nor jolly old B— :
And he swears he'd beat both in the matter of kisses,
Though he's heard how the farmer saluted the Missis.
Colin swears he remembers, but perhaps he's been told
That Annie has hair of a sunshiny gold,
That Clara (I beg, Miss, it won't make you vain)
Has a foot for a stirrup, a hand for a rein;
And he really declares he would come with delight
To your picnic by day and your party by night:
He's a modest young sailor, with very few faults,
And never was known to get tired of a waltz:
So if you're not afraid of a sailor's wild way,
You'd better invite him, and mention the day.
By our visit to you we were cheer'd amid worry,
We shall not forget those few days in a hurry;
And though she's a hatred of fly and of train,
The Missus declares she should like it again.

* * * * *

Big 'un wakes up to ask, for he went to bed early,
Whether Rover is getting a little more curly?

He thinks him a dog that, with good education,
 Might take quite a prominent place in the nation :
 Fetch sticks from the brooks that in Warwickshire
 gurgle,
 And bite any fellow that wanted to burgle.

So " Moonlight " and " Midnight," good-bye for to-day.
 We have, I assure you, more nonsense to say,
 But the Missis is tired and the sailor declares
 He is getting too sleepy for saying his prayers.

* * * * *

" Moonlight " and " Midnight " were names
 given by Mortimer to the ladies, and " Big 'un "
 was the familiar name for " Big dog."

The next lines were written to a lady in
 July, 1874. She wanted, for mischief, to steal
 something that Mortimer would be sure to
 miss, so the secretary advised her to steal his
 " Horace," which was always kept on his
 writing-table, and was his constant companion.

July, 1874.

Who stole my Horace? Naughty girl!
 When next you come I'll steal that curl
 That hangs above your shoulder.
 Your heart I'm sure will palpitate
 To think of such a frightful fate,
 Ere you're a fortnight older.

No! I forgive you. When I see
 How Chloë, Lydia, Lalage,

Asterië, plagued their poet,
 I think my Lady, flower and gem
 Of ladies, may outrival them . . .
 And, faith, she seems to know it.

M. C.

In July, 1874, was published "Frances" [Hurst and Blackett]. It was dedicated to Mortimer Collins's friend and cousin, Henry Froude. This and the following book, "Sweet and Twenty," are undoubtedly more carefully written, and come nearer to being what novels should be, than his other works. But the wildest and most improbable among his novels perhaps show more real genius.

He describes very prettily in "Frances" a garden exactly like his own. He says,—

The window opposite looked out on a mingled mass of green, for the lawn in front of the farm-house was covered with trees of all kinds, and hedged in by lines of elm and lime. Never was Matthew Arnold's "bird-haunted English lawn" more perfectly verified: starling quaintly pecked there, impaling wriggling worms, and the yellow-billed blackbird, followed by his spouse, hunted it on all but the sunniest days, and fought the thrush, more timorous, and water-wagtails crossed the green floor like ladies at a ball, and troubadour red-breasts fought and sang, and wrens fluttered shyly into the densest foliage, and in sharp winters the grosbeak

left his Norway pines, and brought up an English brood, and flew athwart the trees like a giant of the painted butterfly tribe.

In another place he is severe on the philosophy of the present day : he always spoke very strongly on this subject.

I suppose there is a time in the lives of most men when, like Faust, they have met Mephistopheles, "the only genuine devil of these modern times," as Carlyle calls him—the mocking, sneering, scientific fiend—the very essence of Negation and Denial. At this moment he seems to have a famous innings : he turns tables and teaches Darwinism. Chaos is come again, if we may believe his Fiendship : there is no God, no cosmos, no light.

Mephistopheles, the Hater of Light, will assail every man in his time ; happy he who can laugh to scorn the logical demon, pointing to the glorious sun, a lamp lighted and maintained from days immeasurable by the simple thought of Him in whom is no darkness at all.

Mephistopheles hath many disguises to-day ; you meet him in pulpit, in lecture-hall, in erudite journal ; he is the Modern Teacher. God cannot be your Father, since it is unphilosophical to suppose there is a God. Your souls cannot be immortal, since what you fondly fancy is a soul is merely an accidental property of matter. You are only casual developments from lower types, and very likely something higher may be developed from you. Thus wisely speaketh Professor Mephistopheles.

The next paragraph was written at a time when somebody suggested that the efficacy of prayer should be tested by praying for one ward of a hospital.

It is a wonderful and beautiful instinct which induces us, when in dire distress, to ask God for help. Much have we heard of the absurdity of prayer; the modern philosopher, as much bewildered as one of Milton's philosophic devils, wants to know whether the prayer of a mere man can induce the Deity to alter His course. This materialist man of science cannot see that even prayer has its place in God's great design, and that the supreme cry of a human spirit to its Almighty and All-loving Father may be a stronger force than a telegraphic message. The dull scientists who would divide a hospital and pray for one section, and leave the other unprayed for, and see which gets well first, are incapable of knowing—or even of guessing—what prayer means. It is the child's cry to his Father. No man ever prayed heartily without a loving answer—not always what he asked, for the Father knows best what the child needs.

Mortimer Collins always maintained that satire was easy, that to laugh at people for their vices is so much easier than to teach them virtue.

Satire has its value, doubtless, and I read Juvenal with delight; but that delight is increased by the satisfaction I feel that I do not live in such times as

those of Juvenal. Satire, after all, is only the phosphoric gleam born of putrid matter. The true way to improve the people is not by laughing at vice and folly, but by setting a high ideal before them. The articles we see in certain journals, accusing English girls of immodesty, English matrons of inebriety, describing women of bad character, touching, in fact, on that outer verge of evil which we all know to exist, do harm to weak-minded readers, and do no good except to the journals themselves.

The next sentence well expresses Mortimer's hopeful belief in the immortality of the soul.

To those who believe in a future life, God kindly gives hope in the place of sorrow as the years pass on. If grief were interminable, the human race would be always weeping and never working; and it is a strong collateral proof of that immortality of the soul which real men believe and poetasters doubt and philosophers deny, that God does not permit sorrow to be permanent.

Those who have seen how well Mortimer Collins could bear trouble in any shape, will well understand the next sentence.

There are men who can extract light from darkness, as the keenest electric flash comes from the blackest cloud—men who know the significance of that great saying,—

“Sweet are the uses of adversity.”

Yes, they *are* sweet ; but it takes some time to learn the fact. Easy the teaching of the prosperous hours. Most men can enjoy health and wealth, sunshine and love, gaiety and grandeur. Yet the reverse of all these may be enjoyable, when they develop the higher qualities of the man who endures them. To conquer physical and mental pain demands a high and rare effort—but it can be done.

Mortimer Collins used to maintain that men and women were equal, but that one without the other was incomplete, as each possess a separate set of qualifications which fit into the other. He says,—

I look upon the great Feminine Revolt as a thing to be encouraged. Let the battle of sex be fought out. Both men and women want to be taught their position in life ; both men and women must learn the great truth that one without the other is absolutely incomplete.

In the next sentence Mortimer Collins gives his opinion of Byron, whom he considered the second English poet.

Byron was just like London ; brutal, yet gentle ; coarse, yet full of lovely poetry ; selfish, yet generous
(Yes ; I take it that Shakespeare was like England, and Byron like London. Other rivers besides this imperial and imperious stream traversed the large meadows and

wide woodlands of Shakespeare's romance: country as well as city he understood, and the wood of Arden was dearer to him than Jack Falstaff's tavern.

In the next little epigrammatic sentence the author is again on the subject which always made him speak so strongly.

Man's happiness depends on his horizon. The higher we rise the wider the circle, the nearer the absolute light. Your modern blunderers—negative men who call themselves positivists, lovers of humbug who take the name of spiritualists—dig deep holes, and descend into them to narrow their horizon. They are moles, earthworms, newts; they cannot learn a lesson from the eagle and the lark.

Mortimer Collins had an absolute belief in the influence of a good woman. He says,—

Should not a wife be an angel, touching with a wand the undeveloped creature she has wedded, and teaching him what latent power he has?

In the next sentence, the author expresses what he so often said in every-day life.

Truth *does* win in time, though always tardily, and often too late to delight the noble soul who first told the truth. I mean in this world; God lets no man lose. No worthy work can be fruitless to the worker. The fashionable scribbler who coins annual

thousands must pity poor Mr. Milton whose over-estimated Epic brought him less than enough to pay for a Richmond dinner. Where is Milton now, my friend? What power has God entrusted to that lofty spirit!

The next sentence expresses what Mortimer often said. And he gave one the impression that he knew himself well—his strength and weakness—and that he was always aiming at a higher life.

When a man has reached maturity, he should test his faculties; decide how much he can do; decide to do it. To examine yourself from the bystander's point of view will generally humiliate you; to examine yourself from your own point of view, knowing what no one save God and yourself can know of your weaknesses, is a sterner test of character. Dig a mine into your own soul, my friend: you will find plentiful mud; you may find diamonds in that mud.

The following sentence speaks for itself, and Mortimer thoroughly believed what he said:—

To make a man good and great there is nothing but the love of a good woman.

It was about this time that Mortimer wrote the following concerning the wearing of heavy mourning:—

When shall we be relieved from the hideous tyranny

of the undertaker? When will it be understood that to wear sombre crape is not the best way of rejoicing over a dear friend who, after noble work in the world, has gone to his reward? I quote from a letter just received from a lady, a dear friend of mine, who has quite recently gone through this trying ordeal. "I wish," she writes, "I could have got at a little of the money that will have been expended yesterday in providing scarves and hat-bands for 'bloated menials.' . . . The whole thing is a hateful mockery, and just a scheme devised by the world for putting money into tradesmen's pockets, and by this means clothing death with un-Christian gloom." How heartily I agree with my fair and wise correspondent! Could not a funeral be somewhat more festal, if we really believe that our friend, lost for a time, is infinitely happier elsewhere?

Mortimer Collins during the last eight years of his life never wore mourning when his relations died.

In July or August Miss L. C. went abroad, and this seems to have been the first letter after she left.

DEAR LOUISA,—I already miss you, for I have nobody to send *Punch* to, who will take the trouble to guess what I wrote in it. Your letter found Frances in bed, reading *Punch*, with a pair of young hawks on the coverlet—her birthday present to me! They are such little beauties, with the brightest eyes. There were six in the nest.

Don't worry yourself about our troubles, but enjoy your holiday. We shall get through it all, *Deo adjuvante*. I "bate no jot of heart or hope." Frances's foot is much better to-day, and she is as busy as a certain personage in a gale of wind. I expect Tom wishes she was "took wuss."

Edmund Yates tells me that Prince's, in Hans Place, is "taking the shine out of Hurlingham."

The modern millionaire's beneficence is ostentatious. A thousand pounds to a charity is as good a way of saying, "See, I am rich!" as the same sum spent on a horse or a picture. 'Tis the temper of the time.

Always yours,
M. AND F. C.

The last sentence in this letter is in reference to a remark of Miss L. C.'s that some millionaire who could so easily give a thousand pounds to a charity might, with a much smaller sum, relieve Mortimer from the pressure the lawsuit brought on him.

The next is to Miss L. C.

Knowl Hill,
July 4th.

(Just a little after midnight.)

DEAR LOUISA,—By way of contrast to your sister's charming picture of a country parsonage, with all its vivid life, and the quietude of the church close by—a picture delightfully refreshing—I send you an ideal

letter from —, worth consideration for those who believe with Novalis that where there is no God there are ghosts. You will see that he gives me the name and address of a Special spirit, if I want one.

So you liked my pen: I am glad. I'll cut you some more whenever you like, if you will write often. So you found me out in *Punch* easily—only three out of four, young lady. As to "Few and short were the Prayers"—well, you know, unregenerate boyhood prefers cricket to prayers. That same question of prayer perplexed Coleridge, the wisest thinker of this century, but only for a time. It perplexes people now. There are folk who can't pray without discussing the unsoluble problem of free-will and fore-knowledge. I pity them. God the Father Almighty is no problem, at any rate, but a glorious certainty. Yes, we were in London on Friday—I don't think we passed through Grosvenor Street, though we generally do. We bought strawberries and Devonshire cream, and were generally dissipated. We picked up Dr. Steele, who had plenty of anecdote. Did you go to the opening of Leicester Square? There was nearly a riot. It was proposed (but the police interfered) to have a procession, with numerous flags, on each flag being inscribed the name of some Company Albert Grant had ruined. The police stopped it. *Vanity Fair* contained a portrait of Grant the other day, in that easy *déagé* attitude in which the Jewish Briton buries diamonded fingers in the recesses of his nether habiliments. Somebody said it was very like. "Like!" said another; "what nonsense! why, he's got his hands in his own pockets!" Did you see my letter in the *Times* about turnpikes? It has brought me quite a lot

of correspondence. One letter from an old gentleman of eighty-two, who has been Commissioner of Turnpike Roads in the Cotswolds for sixty years. We both long to see you again, dear child.

MORTIMER AND FRANCES.

On July 11th the following letter was in the *Times*. I quote it because it describes so well the birds that frequented the cottage garden, and it shows Mortimer Collins's observation of them.

BIRDS IN BERKSHIRE.

To the Editor of the Times.

SIR,—So enjoyable to read, so thoroughly in the vein of Gilbert White, are Mr. Morris's letters to you about birds, that I am loth to follow in his track. Still, I should like to say a word or two on the subject he has started.

In this neighbourhood there is no observable disease among the house-martins. They do not build under my eaves, I regret to say, for my trees are haunted by innumerable sparrows that drive them off; but all the cottages near are populous with them. The chimney-swallow builds in my chimneys. Sand-martins have made numerous nests in the quarry of Knowl Hill, but the village boys give them no peace. We are without a School Board, and as Mr. Auberon Herbert has found no place in Parliament, there seems no chance for us either of a piano in every cottage, or of an efficient Bill for the preservation of the small birds.

The blue titmouse made himself a nest in the hollow

of an old tree-stump on my lawn, and very cosy he seemed. He fitted in and out of a hole about the size of a shilling,—a tiny blue atom, full of vigour and life. I hang scraps of meat from the trees for the benefit of the tomtits and titmice in the winter, but this year has been so mild that they found food elsewhere, and left their larder untouched. In the winter of 1872-3 I was visited by the pine grosbeak from Norway, who brought up a brood in the firs close by, and greatly relished the peas on which my tumbler pigeons are fed, and stayed here till Easter week.

The young robins grow russet-breasted here also; but where are the crimson-breasted old robins gone? Do they migrate and get eaten by Frenchmen? Mr. Morris is lucky in having so few slugs and snails; the blackbirds and thrushes do good work among them here, but do not succeed in keeping them down. Swifts shriek in scores across the garden every evening, serenading their sitting mates according to Gilbert White.

I have not seen the golden-crested wren here for some years, but other wrens are numerous. A bird that adheres to this neighbourhood, defying the gardeners, who shoot him down mercilessly as an eater of fruit buds, is that beautiful air-minstrel, the bullfinch. He sways on the top of a rose-briar, and flutes away deliciously. Knowl Hill is full of them. From the top of that hill you can see Windsor Castle (always catching the sunshine, if there is any in the sky), Cliefden, New Lodge, hallowed by the remembrance of the illustrious Belgian, Ascot, Sandhurst, Guildford Castle, St. Martha's Hill, Bearwood, the towers and

chimneys of Reading—sometimes, on fine evenings, the Crystal Palace, looking like a meteor on the horizon. The mellow music of the bullfinches is a pleasant accompaniment, and I could wish the gardeners would not shoot them down. Have the birds no friend in the House of Commons? The existing Act is really useless.

MORTIMER COLLINS.

Knowl Hill, Berks.

This letter brought much pleasant correspondence with naturalists, but none pleasanter than with Admiral Baillie Hamilton, which was continued for some time, and which seemed likely to result in a friendship being formed. The Admiral has unfortunately not been able to find Mortimer Collins's letters. He says in answer to a request for them,—

It is really a pain to me to say that I fear your late husband's letters to me are no longer in existence, or, that if not destroyed, I scarcely know where to look for them.

I kept them by me for a considerable time—carefully “docketed,” for they were most interesting, and in fact constituted that which would be of general public interest. His graphic description—a complete picture—of his loved home, his talk of his favourite birds—those which found a home in his garden—and a discourse (so to speak) of his cherished trees.

On the subject of birds, their habits and history, we had a common and strong interest; and our interchange of thought or views respecting them could scarcely fail to be interesting to the Naturalist. But it was the genial and lively tone in which he wrote on (with him) such favourite subjects that gave a singular charm to his letters, and made me for the time jealous lest I should lose them.

My constantly multiplying correspondence, added to a want on my part of a right arrangement of my letters—as well as the absence of space for their disposal—is a frequent cause of disappointment to myself, and in no case more so than in the present one.

It is just possible that they are somewhere to be found, but I fear that the coming across them may be too late for your faithful and loyal purpose; but you may be sure of your wish being borne in mind. It would be no greater pleasure to yourself than it would be to me, if I should be so fortunate as to find any of your gifted husband's writings.

In another letter the Admiral says,—

Pray make use of my letter in any way you please; I shall be glad if it can at all forward your object, and show the singular freshness and buoyant tone of your husband's amiable and poetic life.

On August 3rd there was a letter of Mortimer Collins's in the *Times* on the storage of water, which brought him correspondence with engineers and others.

Although at this time he was doing an almost incredible amount of work and was very much worried with a lawsuit, he could take interest in the questions of the day, and write ably on almost any subject.

In August, writing on hobbies, Mortimer Collins speaks of his own hobby of collecting books. He says,—

Lately I was visiting an eminent man of letters, in every room of whose charming house there was so much rare china that I (being an awkward person) felt almost afraid to move, and he told me that when he was fatigued with work, or annoyed by any of the innumerable "worries inevitable as upward-flying sparks," he recovered cheerfulness in a moment if he met with some purchaseable rarity. An artist of my acquaintance writes to me from Branscombe, in Devon, where he is inhaling ozone, asking me if I can tell him where he might hope to pick up any old china or carved oak chests. He could not have applied to any one worse qualified. I am desperately ignorant of what makes china delightful in the collector's eyes. My only hobby in the way of collection is books; but I do not care for them as the real bibliomaniac does, because they are rare or because they are old. What I like is a great author in noble type—the Baskerville "Virgil," for example, where the soft type is so appropriate to the Roman's divine grace and elegance; or the Tonson "Lucretius," whose vivid black letters

are just as suitable to the Epicurean poet's stalwart verse, rugged from very strength. By the way, my correspondent is sketching a cottage at Branscombe, doomed to be pulled down, on whose chimney is the date 1580. Very picturesque he tells me. I wonder who built it in good Queen Elizabeth's days?

Many of Mortimer Collins's friends will remember with what pleasure he showed them some Baskerville classics.

The next letter was written to Miss L. C. when she was abroad.

August 25, 1874.

DEAR LOUISA,—We got your pleasant letter this morning; I fear the *Times* with Tyndall in it has perished, but Frances thinks you will get as much illumination from my verses in to-day's *Punch*, which I send. I hope the German post-office won't steal it. My only other contribution is *Punch* to Archbishop Tait.

— has had another assault from Frances: she will tell you. We found he had been talking about our affairs to somebody he casually met at an archery supper in Staffordshire! She went and bearded him.

“Did I really?” he said, with charming simplicity.

“Frances” was reviewed in the *Times* yesterday, and rather nicely too. Frances is described as “a lovely lady, who should hold her own on Mudie's shelves against all comers.” So Frances I. is in hopes that Frances II. will have good luck. There is also a

review in the *Morning Post*, in which it is called the most entrancing book of the season.

Your sister paid us a visit on Saturday, and sat on the lawn some time, and seemed surprised at the familiarity of a little robin that came close up to us. He is wonderfully familiar; perches on my knee, and sings and comes close to us all day long. His friendliness dates from one day when he came into the book-room and was frightened and half-stunned himself against the window. I picked him up and induced him to drink a little water, and then put him on the grass: he revived, and has been our intimate acquaintance ever since.

The Premier's grant arrived this morning, and tomorrow we go to town on a furniture errand. We both dread the malignant monotony of chairs and tables at Shoolbred's.

Our love always,

MORTIMER AND FRANCES.

The little robin remained our friend for many months, till the next pairing season. He was quite young when we first knew him, without his red breast, and when we sat on the lawn in the summer with our writing and needlework, he would hop about the table and walk over the manuscript as Mortimer wrote, or peck at the cottons in the secretary's work-basket. When we went to the gate to meet a friend or see one go the robin would always come and perch on the gate and sing. As the winter came on he used

to spend a good deal of time in the house, but he had some difficulty in getting in or out, for there were two rival robins jealous of his privileges. Robins have a habit of choosing one particular part of a garden, and keeping it and fighting off any other robin. Our favourite had to pass through the domains of two robins to get to the house, and there was often what Mortimer called "a triangular duel." While he was in the house, one of the rivals, and sometimes both would sit in an ash-tree opposite the dining-room window, and watch for the little fellow to come out, and it was very amusing to see our little friend looking for an opportunity to slip away when his enemies were not on the alert. One unlucky day in January of 1875 our robin hurt himself in the dining-room, and I think he must have been unable to defend himself effectually from his enemies after the accident, as he never ventured from his own part of the garden after; but he remained our friend till the attractions of a Mrs. Robin drew him away. Mortimer had friendships with various robins, but this was the most remarkable one.

The following were Miss L. C.'s birthday lines in 1874 :—

Why do I love September,
 Month of the shadowy hours,
 With its long lights drawn across the lawn,
 With its pleasant fruits and flowers?
 From the leaves as they turn we well may learn
 The beauty of calm decay,
 Yet their deep tints bring a promise of Spring
 When the world will be young and gay.

How he chirps when the leaves are greenest
 That bird with the crimson breast,
 When eventide's serenest,
 And amber floods the west:
 Then the swallows float with a liquid note—
 They are dreaming of distant seas,
 And the starlings walk o'er the lawn, and talk:
 Are there wiser birds than these?

'Tis not for the birds of September,
 Nor for its fragrant flowers,
 That I most the month remember
 Of soft sweet shadowy hours:
 But because one morn a fay was born,
 Who is lovely and lively too,
 The truth in whose eyes hath no disguise—
 It was you, Louisa, you.

MOERTIMER AND FRANCES.

On the 6th of October our favourite dog Fido died. I quote the following from the *Press and St. James's Chronicle* :—

If my "Adversaria" are dull and brief this day, kind-hearted readers will forgive me when I tell them that I have just put turf on the tomb of a favourite Skye terrier, who died suddenly on Wednesday. He was the most affectionate, irritable, excitable dog in the world; would bite my boot savagely if by accident I touched him, and then put his cool black nose in my hand by way of apology. He was given me eight years ago by the editor of one of our Quarterlies, because in his jealous moods he *would* bite the legs of a newly-arrived editorial baby. It is a Liberal review, so I at once accepted Fido as a Tory dog. Tory he was, to the backbone. He loved his mistress and he hated cats. Can a good Constitutional dog's epitaph be written in fewer words? Well, he was skylarking in my book-room with his heels in the air; and then he rushed out on the lawn in the sunshine; and then we heard a strange scream—and dear old Fido was picked up dead. I suppose it is humiliating to confess that I have shed some tears about him. If my aunt, Miss Angelina Vixen, had died and left me that quiet two thousand a year on which she now maintains missionaries and cats, I might not have wept much; but I did mourn my poor dear irrepressible troublesome Fi, who was wont to interrupt me in the midst of an attempted epigram. With my own hands have I buried my dear friend beneath the yellowing limes. Shall I meet his spirit again? Ah! who can solve that problem?

The death of Fido was the first break in the happiness of the little circle of friends at the

Cottage. It was something more than the loss of a dog; it was the loss of a friend—a friend who had been an hourly companion—for the dogs were completely a part of the life at the Cottage.

The next letter is to Miss Louisa C. “Quiz” was a dog belonging to Miss L. C.’s sister, and was destroyed in consequence of disease.

October, 1874.

S. Dionysius, &c.

LOUISA LUCIDA,—The saint above-named was the discoverer of wine, though that discovery is inaccurately ascribed to Janus or Januarius, which is Noah written Semitically. There’s a piece of erudition for you.

Ask me when we meet, and I’ll tell you why Janus (like a certain vicar) had two faces. My poor darling Frances is mourning the sudden death of Fido—the pleasantest, quarrelsomest, lovingest of dogs. He had been rolling on his back in the book-room ten minutes before he died. He lay down on the lawn in the sunshine, gave a sudden cry, and left us.

I cried about it, that’s a fact: but I wouldn’t tell anybody except you.

When I got your letter (by the second post) telling me of poor Quiz’s probable doom, I walked audaciously to the stately porch of C——, and interviewed the footman. It was too late. Quiz already lay beneath your mulberry-tree. Now, if I had come in time I meant to take him home and make Frances doctor him. I am very sorry for the poor little fellow.

There is no news, except that Allwright mysteriously informs me that a secret intrigue is in progress against our Clock. Hooray! as some one once remarked—I forget where. I have sent a report of our meeting to the *Berkshire Chronicle* and the *John Bull*, with Miss C—— as member of the committee. Don't tell your sister, or she won't forgive me.

MORTIMER AND FRANCES

send their love to

LOUISA.

That's one way of singing (no, signing) a letter. Flat forgery!

F. will write when she's better.

Here is another little bit from "Adversaria," in October, 1874.

James Dobson of Bath usually calls to see me once a year. He called the other day; and, as the sky was rainy and the weather "juicy," he deigned to accept a glass of whisky—the best of spirits, as is well known in Caledonia (stern and wild, fit nurse for a poetic child), for keeping the damp out of a man who is deerstalking or grouse-shooting, or (far humbler occupation) selling birds to all buyers. This last doth James Dobson of Bath: and in his glass-shielded cart carries about a good many pounds' worth of rare birds, which he offers to all who like "the angels of the air." Real beauties are they, charming vagaries of nature, but I introduced James Dobson to a couple of tame owls, taken in the woods close by, and comfortably housed on my back lawn, that rather astonished him. The exoteric wisdom of the owl is wonderful; he beats Lord Thurlow.

Talking of birds, my most familiar robin insists on taking a matutinal stroll with me : I hear his voice in the hedge or on the telegraph wires that dominate the road, and there he is, singing a morning welcome. And the young thrushes are learning their mellow music of delicious repetition now ; I hear them as I lie lazily in bed, wondering when my bath-water will come up, and what in the world I shall write about. Day after day they have improved ; it was a prattling song first, like a baby's ; now I will back one young mavis in my trees against the Patti herself. Thank God for the birds.

The owls here alluded to lived for five years in an aviary built round the stump of an apple-tree, and were great favourites with the master. They were very fond of him, but were nervous of strangers.

Here is another little bit from an article written at this time :—

My experience (and I have published a good many books) is that the paper-maker gets most out of a book, and the author the least—a curious illustration of the comparative value of mind and matter. Perchance the balance may be rectified in the next world. Perchance the author who has to live in a cottage and drink the cheapest wines is not even in this world much less happy than the paper-maker, whose mansion includes a billiard-room and a private theatre.

In November Mortimer Collins commenced

writing a weekly article for the *Pictorial World* called "The Loiterer," which will explain the opening sentence of the next letter to Miss L. C. "The Loiterer" contained many allusions to himself and his way of living, so that I shall have occasion to quote it sometimes.

DEAR LOUISA,—A little note (for I am busy loitering) to say I have looked at the original of mote and beam. In the translation the antithesis is lost: *beam* means any large mass of timber, and that is close enough: but the word rendered *mote* (an atom) means a small splinter of wood. So it might better be translated that a person blinded by a log of wood could yet see the small splinter in another man's eye.

I enclose an ingenious monogram. The lady is a great rider; her initials C. A. P. Do you see the whip and strap and horse-shoe? Hastily,

MORTIMER.

The following lines were written inside a pocket-book which was given to Mrs. George S. in December, 1874:—

DEAR JOSEPHINE,—I write to you :
My wife exclaims, "Whate'er you do,
Don't be too wise or witty :
Don't use the longest words yet seen,
Write something just like Josephine,
Simple and sweet and pretty.

I wish I could. The world would read
Such verses with delight indeed ;
 Joyous and gay and airy :
I'd write 'em, if I had the skill,
Not with steel pen or grey goose-quill,
 But plume from wing of fairy.

We send you here a little book
Into which nobody will look
 Except your lord and master :
Write in it all that's sweet and gay,
The joys of many a sunny day,
 And never one disaster.

The next verses were written to a favourite servant lad, who lived with Mortimer Collins for five years, and who was inclined to be untidy in appearance and had some other faults. His master thought that some verses which would remind him of these faults would perhaps cure them. As will be readily seen, the style of the verse is suited to the subject.

These lines will no doubt appear very trivial to many people who will think they could easily do the same sort of thing. But how few there are who would take such trouble for their servants? Many men of much less intellect than Mortimer Collins would not condescend to it.

In '74, December first,
When Tom was quite in sleep immersed,
The Fairy Order came and said
A word or two beside his bed.
No neater fairy ever stepp'd ;
How very smooth her hair is kept
Her boots and gloves so closely fit her ;
Her rings and studs so brightly glitter,
Her linen is the very whitest,
Her smile the kindest, step the lightest.

“Tom !” she exclaim'd, “ I come to see
Whether you mean to stick to me.
Seventeen to-day, almost a man,
I hope you'll form a proper plan,
Never to Laziness incline,
But do your work as I do mine ;
Wash for the sake of looks and health,
Never do aught that's wrong by stealth,
With hair well-brush'd and linen clean
You're always pleasant to be seen :
Don't roughly glass or china handle
Or drop the grease from careless candle,
Or stories in the kitchen tell
When you should listen for the bell,
Or let another servant thieve,
And with a string of lies deceive
Your Mistress, but for whom I fear
You'd not have seen your seventeenth year.
If you attend and look alive,
I'll come again in '75 ;
If not, you'll have another warder,

The hideous, horrid hag *Disorder*,
 With hair uncomb'd, with dirty skin,
 With breath that always smells of gin,
 With rags to wear no tramp would steal,
 And stocking always down at heel.
 Avoid her, Tom ! that phantom pale
 Leads to the workhouse and the gaol.
 While, if my bidding you will do,
 I'll surely make a man of you,
 Give you good luck all through your life,
 And (when you're old enough) a wife.
 Take my advice, from faults keep clear,
 I'll come again, this day next year."

The fairy vanish'd :—Tom intends
Order shall be his first of friends ;
 Whether it is so will be seen
 In '75, when Tom's eighteen.

On the last day of the year the following letter was sent to Byron Blewitt, the medical adviser and friend of Mortimer Collins :—

DEAR BYRON,—Your nice little present,
 So pretty with fragrance and flowers,
 To me was uncommonly pleasant,
 And cheer'd the chill winter's dull hours.

We wish you good fortune hereafter,
 With nothing to trouble or fear,
 But now and then moments for laughter,
 A thoroughly prosperous year.

Thus we write on the last of December,
The year having come to its end,
Knowing well we shall always remember
Our Byron, a thorough good friend.

The last letter that I quote in 1874 is to Miss L. C., written on the last day of the year.

DEAREST LOUISA,—What shall I say to you ?

Lady of ladies fairest and best,
It is too cold to write anything gay to you,
Oh, that the wind would veer to the west !

Oh, that the snow would pass from the lawn away,
Giving us beautiful emerald green :
Then from the fireside happily drawn away,
Sunshine would greet us and gladden the scene.

Never mind chilliness : hearts have heat in 'em,
Nothing so warm as the warmth of a friend.
These cottage rooms, we shall surely meet in 'em,
Dearest Louisa, the next year's end.

M. and F. C.

END OF VOL. I.

MORTIMER COLLINS:

HIS LETTERS AND FRIENDSHIPS

WITH SOME ACCOUNT OF HIS LIFE.

EDITED BY

FRANCES COLLINS.

IN TWO VOLUMES.

VOL II.

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MORTIMER COLLINS:
HIS LETTERS AND FRIENDSHIPS, WITH SOME
ACCOUNT OF HIS LIFE.

CHAPTER I.

1875.

JANUARY TO MARCH.

FROM the commencement of 1875 till his death, Mortimer Collins gives us so much of his life and opinions in his articles, that it is possible almost to form a diary from them. Such opinions and expressions better describe his life and character than anything I can say.

He was always so happy in his remarks on birds that I feel justified in quoting him continually on this subject. On January 2nd, 1875, he writes as follows:—

In weather which seems to freeze the brain itself, Arctic weather of the keenest kind, it is not altogether easy to write. I am just now reminded of Keats's most Shakespearian line,

The owl, with all his feathers, was a-cold,

by a pair of owls caged opposite my dining-room window, that just pass all their time (except dinner-time) in the snug box provided for them. The cock turns out at about noon to look at the weather, shakes his sagacious head, returns to inform his spouse that she had better stay where she is. Lucky birds! they get fed regularly, and haven't to write books or articles to pay their bills.

This weather is making the birds eager for every crumb of bread we can spare them. We should feed them now, lest the groves should be songless in summer. My latest visitors have been a pair of ravens, that have come down to my doors in search of food. Vast birds they look in my leafless trees, with their long beaks and bright eyes. I hope no bucolic lout with unlicensed gun will shoot them down. The birds eager for food and weak on the wing, are just now at a terrible disadvantage.

In January "Cavendish," the famous writer on whist, visited the Cottage, and Mortimer Collins writes of this visit in the following way.

I had the pleasure, the other day, of entertaining a famous whist-player. I never learnt so much about cards in so short a time. I am not certain that all this knowledge was not too much for me, as I woke next day with an awful headache, which made me curiously disinclined to do any work. Indeed, I dreamt all night of knaves dressed like fiends, with horns, hoofs, and tails of the most frightful colours and dimensions. He informed me that during the last ten years he has played twenty thousand rubbers at whist, and won about two thousand pounds. Is the game worth the candle? I was surprised to find he was quite ignorant of quadrille, and knew nothing of the Italian tarots.

The subjoined letter is to Mr. S. R. Townshend Mayer, who was at that time Editor of the *St. James's Magazine*.

January 23, 1875.

DEAR TOWNSHEND MAYER,—Your note did not reach me, but its meaning is intelligible from the *Athenæum's* "Literary Gossip." I am at your service, and I shall be glad to hear what you would like to be done.

If you care to connect my name with any of my books, please let it be "The Inn of Strange Meetings." I write novels for money; verse because I like it. I wish I could educate the public into taking delight in a novel in verse—such as the *Odyssey*, *Don Juan*, *Aurora Leigh*. Concerning Dr. Hayman, I am glad to

think he was pleased with what I could do on his behalf. As I had not even heard his name until his appointment to Rugby, it is clear that I was moved by a desire to do justice. I never met with a case which so excited my indignation and contempt: and I am heartily glad the Chief of the Party to which I belong found an early opportunity to make to Dr. Hayman some amends for his persecution by people to whom gentlemanly feeling was a thing unknown.

Faithfully yours,

MORTIMER COLLINS.

He took for many years a great deal of interest in the affairs of his own parish, an interest which was fully appreciated.

He was always much interested also in the question of water supply. I quote a few lines from the "Loiterer" of the 30th of January.

All the lexicographers—Bailey, Johnson, Richardson, Horne Tooke, Hensleigh Wedgwood—derive the word *ague* from the French *aigu*, acute. I don't believe it; it comes from *aqua*, water. The water is out in my vicinage in terrible quantities; the air is chilled with it, and I am aguish. Every bone in my body aches. The ditches are brooks, the commons are lakes; the

village school boys and girls are rushing into the water, splashing each other, moistening their stockings, and laying in a grand stock of rheumatism for consumption when fifteen has developed into fifty. You cannot teach children the unwisdom of these things. How I wish I had been soundly flogged in my youth every time I came home wet through—that's about fifteen dozen days of the thirty dozen or so that make up the year! My cuticle would have suffered, but my bones would have been in better condition than they are now.

At this moment an immense disused chalk-pit not far from my house is filled with water to overflowing. In July next it will be as dry as a bone, and the farmers will be sending miles for water. They won't puddle that huge pit and turn it into a permanent reservoir. It is strange to see how dull farmers can be; and they are the very lords of earth, and do the noblest manual and material work there is to be done. In imitation of Alexander and Diogenes, I say, "If I were not a penman I would be a ploughman."

*"O fortunatos nimium, sua si bona norint,
Agricolas! quibus ipsa, procul discordibus armis,
Fundit humo facilem victum justissima tellus."*

Why, when the prodigal winter rains fill every pit, natural or artificial, that exists in the neighbourhood, should these "too fortunate farmers" be without a drop of water in the droughts of summer? Simply

because they will not save that water. I have written many letters to the *Times* on this topic, and so have far weightier authorities than I; but the *fortunati agricolæ* are incurable.

Mortimer Collins always wrote very strongly on what is called Spiritualism.

Just at this time he wrote a great deal on the subject. In one place he says,—

The argument of probability in reference to Spiritualism is clear against it. If the soul be immortal, as the Spiritualist admits, it will go on growing elsewhere as it has grown on earth.

The instinctive ambition of man is a prophecy of his future: which among us would like to think of an eternity of just the very work we are doing now? I can imagine Mr. Disraeli glad to get beyond the region of politics; Dr. Colenso rather weary of finding inaccuracies in the Pentateuch; the Poet Laureate anxious to meet a hero other than King Arthur; and, indeed, scores of people that I know would be glad to dismount from their hobbies. But these Spiritualists, when they profess to bring back some gossiping ghost to revisit the glimpses of the gaslight, present us with an imbecile creature who has gone backward instead of forward. Worse than a Bourbon, if Shakespeare or Milton be called to the front, he has learnt

nothing and forgotten everything. An invisible Shakespeare without wisdom or wit, or rhythm or rhyme, painfully hammering out nonsense on a table, is enough to make one dread immortality. Fancy, after escaping into the illimitable ether, and being winged for flights into infinitude, a recall to a dull room in a London house, to be questioned on trifles through a psychic.

These remarks seemed to have caused some comment, and he replied as follows,—

Some cursory remarks of mine on matters spiritualistic have brought me a little correspondence. Before noting it I may observe that there is a tendency to call things by names which convey exactly the opposite meaning. There are among us, for example, scientific gentlemen who style themselves Positivists, but who are actually Negativists, since they deny the existence of any positive power to guide the universe. Similarly the persons who call themselves Spiritualists are really Materialists, their desire being to give substantial form to that impalpable essence which is the spirit of man.

They cannot believe in the soul's immortality unless souls will come back and lift dining-tables and play accordions in the dark. Any sane man would prefer annihilation to an immortality of subjugation to the

will of a medium. It appears to me that Spiritualists ought to form a society, which might be called the Royal Hysterical Society. Any F.R.H.S. of the Spiritualist set could hardly be confounded with the Historicals or the Horticulturalists.

Knowl Hill,
February 12, 1875.

DEAR TOWNSHEND MAYER,—I am very grieved to think of you as an invalid: but the light of intellect keeps one alive, and the blindness of Homer and Milton rather intensified than stayed their power. That I have alleviated any pain at any time is to me a delight. I have tried, since my theory of life was formed, to write what is wholesome, and will do the world good. It is not what pays best, but I stick to my point.

Echo Bridge was written one day when my wife and I and one of the loveliest ladies in the world were out together, and the lady in question told us of an echo on the Great Western that she had known from her childhood. We tested it. It whispers miraculously. I wrote the lines to send to her, without any notion of their being printed, but I am glad you like them. I need hardly say that I am also glad you like *Sir Everard*. I wrote it at a heat, without the remotest idea of what I should do with it, and that is always the best work I do. Was it Paget of the *New Examen* who

liked it? I have a great admiration for the way in which he demolished Macaulay.

Your kind and frank way of writing deserves unre-served return: and I assure you that when anything of mine seems worthy of use it shall be forwarded. I am not quite regular in my habits. Both in quantity and quality my days vary. There are times when I write an immense deal easily, right away, as a bird (a carrier pigeon for example) voyages at a minute a mile through air: there are others when my brain's lead and my pen's dead and I can move no faster than a snail.

But if I agree to do certain work, I always do it to the moment: so, if you take any story from me (whereon my wife will write to yours) you may depend on a punctuality never yet broken.

Ah, one thing I forgot almost, my wife is a *jewel*. She is an *amethyst*. You know the virtue of that gem. Your marriage was romantic: mine not less. You shall hear all about it when you come to Knowl Hill, and see our pigeons fly, and smell our roses if we get any.

Yours as a friend,

MORTIMER COLLINS.

The Valentines were written as usual this year and from their general tone it seems that the weather was bad. I fear that these trifles of verse will appear great nonsense to some

people, and yet there is something to admire in them. Mortimer Collins had plenty of real serious hard work to do and he did it well, and yet he could find time to amuse his friends with these elegant trifles. And perhaps after all it is not so easy to throw off such a quantity of light verse as it seems. Almost any man of education could write a valentine in verse, but it might not be so easy to write a dozen in an afternoon, all varied, and suiting various characters. And perhaps there are not many people who would be troubled to do it even if they could.

The first is to Miss L. C. .

VALENTINE, 1875.

LOUISA dear, the rain is falling,
One needs a lot of coal and wine,
And poetry is not enthralling,
And who can write a Valentine?
Where are the Poet's frolic fancies
When doleful damp the Fates will send
Yet we'll find nonsense, I and Frances,
For our dear friend.

With you our notions always mingle,
 We love you e'en when most severe,
 We hope you'll carefully keep single,
 Else might we lose you, that seems clear ;
 And though a marriage is the sequel
 Of woman's life, its natural end,
 We wonder where to find the equal
 Of our dear friend.

No : sweet Louisa's match will never
 Be found upon this whirling globe :
 She's witty, wise, *but not too clever*,
 Depends not upon brilliant robe.
 She is a woman—bright, courageous,
 Lovely, and willing to descend
 Among Bohemian folk outrageous,
 And be—Our Friend—

MORTIMER.

The next is to Mrs J. V.

Dear Mrs. V., I hope that we
 To quarrel shan't incline,
 Because to-day I cannot say
 Much in a Valentine.
 The weather makes the air a sponge,
 Really too damp it is
 To give one's foe a rapier lunge,
 One's ladylove a kiss.

When summer comes I'll try to write
What suits a lady fair,
When there is music in the night,
And fragrance in the air.

What now I send is poor and yet
You'll greet the halting line,
Which proves and never can forget
That you're my Valentine.

The next is to Miss Clara S.

O Clara!! . . . that is all I can say
On this abominable misty day.
A million laundresses, O lady mine,
Are trying to wash out Saint Valentine.
Is Budbrooke damp, a downright brook of mud?
No matter, we shall see the roses bud.
There is a sun astronomers declare,
Though seldom he emerges through the air.
When he returns and makes the hours divine,
Perhaps you'll answer this brief Valentine.

The next is to Miss M. A. S.

This is Valentine's Eve, dear Annie,
But really the weather is most uncanny,
And a fellow would have a lot to do
To fancy himself in love with you.

For Venus herself isn't nice in a mist,
Nor warm enough to be pleasantly kiss'd ;
And so, dear child, you well divine,
I'm not in a mood for a Valentine.

But I love you too well with your sweet soft ways,
To forget you now on the rarest of days,
And I'll send you more in a merrier metre,
When the happy heart of the year grows sweeter.
When the roses blush, and the larks sing high
'Mid sapphire depths of the soft blue sky,
We'll enjoy the glorious golden time,
And Annie shall laugh at a livelier rhyme.

He not only wrote several Valentines to ladies, but also some for his Secretary to gentlemen. One of those in 1875 is perhaps worth quoting as a specimen. It is to a gentleman on the Coal Exchange, who was a frequent visitor at the Cottage.

DEAR CHARLIE,—'Tis Valentine's Day,
And although you're too lazy to write,
I'll take up my pencil to say
A few words of frolic to-night.

You, living in London, and crazy
With business that bothers your soul,
Are getting uncommonly hazy,
For poetry quarrels with coal.

'Tis yours at this moment to ponder
O'er the prices of diamonds black,
You can't see Saint Valentine wander
Through the country's sweet emerald track.
In our garden are crocuses yellow,
And a lovely young laureat thrush,
I'm sorry for you, my dear fellow,
For you must to the Coal Exchange rush.

But I hope, and my hope is sincerer
Than hopes that some people express,
That quickly your way will be clearer,
And the City will bother you less.
And the day that you give us a dinner
At Richmond with capital wine,
I'll say you're a jolly old sinner,
And fit to be my Valentine.

There is another bit of nonsense written by
Mortimer Collins for his Secretary this year to
his friend and cousin, Henry Frowde, in Pater-
noster Row, which I think I might quote.

DEAR HARRY,—Just a single line
To tell you I'm your Valentine.

Your learned Row shows ne'er a sign
Of such a buxom Valentine.

The sun has quite refused to shine,
Although it is Saint Valentine.

Old Mortimer, that miscreant mine,
Growls at a damp Saint Valentine.

I wish you had been here to dine
Upon the Eve of Valentine.

You would be better far than wine
To help us through Saint Valentine.

Come down next week, and I'll incline
To keep you as my Valentine.

Where thrush and blackbird sing divine,
Come and accept your Valentine.

In February he again writes of the birds
in his garden, in the "Loiterer."

Long ago I wrote some verses, entitled "My
Thrush," to a minstrel of the air who brought me
divine music in the fairest days of a delicious year.
He sang

“All through the sultry hours of June,
From morning blithe to golden noon.”

I think his progeny must have increased and multiplied, thanks to my regular fights against the bird-murdering louts who used to haunt my neighbourhood, but whom, by persistently calling for the aid of the police, I have thoroughly discomfited. There are scores of thrushes now singing in the wildest way: as I write there is a young bird (I know he is young, for he has not yet caught the true tune of the mature singer) full within view, high on a lime-tree, putting me out of conceit with what I am writing. How true is the cry of the old balladist:—

“’Tis merry, ’tis merry, in gay greenwood,
When mavis and merle are singing!”

How true, again, that Shakespeare-touch of Browning’s:—

“That’s the wise thrush, he sings each song twice
over,
Lest you should think he never could recapture,
The first fine careless rapture!”

The thrush sang in May, according to the poet’s lovely verse; but this year the birds began long before Saint Valentine.

In the same column he breaks out into

verse in his usual way, though still keeping the prose lines.

Fair reader, if there's reader fair who in this scientific air is not too wise and grave and solemn to loiter through the Loiterer's column, he hopes you had a Valentine as joyous as the day was fine. He hopes that somebody there is to send you a poetic kiss, if such a thing one dares to mention : it seems an obsolete invention.

He does this often both in books and articles.

The "poetic kisses," of the present day are generally fine bits of paper and tinsel, or something substantial in the way of a present for practical people. Mortimer's "poetic kisses" no doubt gave as much pleasure as any present.

February 17, 1875.

DEAR TOWNSHEND MAYER,—I have read your pamphlet, which appears to me a just and valuable statement of the case ; but I doubt your getting a Parliamentary inquiry, as Disraeli will probably stand on the aphorism, *Quieta non movere*. The conduct of Temple and Scott moves one to indignation that English "gentlemen" can do such things ; but perchance,

after all, the affair may make Hayman a bishop. I have not time to say how much I admire his "Homeric Studies."

Yours, in great haste,

MORTIMER COLLINS.

The pamphlet here mentioned was "Extracts from the Minute Book of the Governing Body of Rugby School, with Comments and a Preface" by Mr. Townshend Mayer.

The next lines are to Miss L. C., whom we called our good fairy. She said one day she should like to train some children according to her own ideas.

February 21, 1875.

There is a lady well we know,
And call her our Good Fairy,
Who's eager to set up an O-
riental seminary.

How to employ her vigorous life
She seems in a quandary ;
She, who would make a perfect wife,
Sets up a seminary.

On Clifton Down, by Bristol Town,
A spot serene and airy,

Louisa thinks she'll settle down,
And start her seminary.

She'll take her children all to church,
And whip them when contrary,
And be like good old Mother Birch
In this new seminary.

I've got for her another scheme,
This plan of life to vary ;
Why not make snow-white Devonshire cream
At some delightful dairy ?

Go out as milkmaid just at dawn ;
Tho' cows may be contrary,
And kick the bucket on the lawn—
'Tis not a seminary.

Roll back your sleeves and milk the kine,
Of labour never chary,
And drink the matin air like wine,
And shun the seminary.

Still there's a better way than this—
To conjugate *amare*—
And let a lover's happy kiss
Be your true seminary.

Advice from

MORTIMER AND FRANCES.

In "Adversaria" of February 27th, Mortimer Collins gives part of an answer he received to his Valentine to Miss M. A. S.

I write Valentines to many ladies—how many matters not. This morning (*die Jovis*) I received from the central county of England an answer to one in which I had pleaded the chilliness of the day as an excuse for the stupidity of my verse. I quote a couple of stanzas to show that there are ladies who can write pleasant and graceful verse:—

"Who for fine weather still doth tarry,
 Must often lose both time and tide;
 Who will not kiss in February
 May find in May a kiss denied.
 Far different he, may Fate assign
 To be my life-long Valentine!

* * * *

"When dark clouds line the wintry sky,
 And from the east the cold winds blow,
 And the poor sheep close-huddled lie,
 Who's this comes riding o'er the snow?
 Unmindful he if foul or fine,
 No weather stops my Valentine!"

This charming bit of verse, which shows (I could bring other proofs) that the ladies of to-day can write

pleasant poetry to their friends, was dated—"The Eve of St. Valentine (Old Style)."

I quote the following from the "Loiterer" of March 13th :—

Is the spring at last coming slowly up this way, as Coleridge hath it in the most dainty-mystical of all romances? The bitter east has left us for a while. Will it soon be possible to loiter on lawns and beneath lime-alleys, and listen to blackbird and thrush without fear of rheumatism and diphtheria? Let us hope to echo the charming words of Catullus :—

"Jam ver egelidos refert tepores."

By the way, the Romans evidently took a vernal holiday instead of our autumnal one. The poet proceeds—

"Ad claras Asiæ volemus urbes,
Jam mens prætrepidans avet vagari,
Jam læti studio pedes vigescunt."

I certainly always feel more disposed for wandering in spring than in autumn. After a winter's torpidity and enforced confinement to one's own hearth comes the natural desire to be in some fresh place; and, in good faith, if I had not to loiter on paper to-day, I think I should take a twenty-mile walk. In autumn, after a calm summer, I like to see the melancholy

beauty of decay steal gradually over the woodlands I love best.

The following was written on March 13: the friend alluded to was Walter Thornbury.

Mortimer Collins, as I have before mentioned, was a good chess-player.

An old friend of mine many years ago remarked to me that literary men (of whom he is one) seldom deemed the game of chess worth playing. To this I demur. It is a game which gives a sensitive and active intellect a restful change after study or writing. It is not trivial, and it rests wholly on skill. To play it as a science, with careful memory of all the openings, is of course impossible except to a professional player; but simply as a recreation it is without equal or rival among sedentary games: and as to its being despised by men of letters, there is plentiful evidence to the contrary. Howard Staunton, the greatest of our players, lately deceased, was amongst the subtlest of our Shakespearian scholars; Peacock, humorist and poet, has in one of his choicest novels, "Melincourt," described a "chess dance" with such accuracy and picturesqueness that any reader may see he loved the game. Dr. Pusey is one of our best living players; and when he and the Poet Præd were at Eton together, he, being high in the school, chose

Praed, who was much younger, as a player who could meet him on equal terms. These are fair examples of men of letters that were chess-players. Doubtless many more might be mentioned.

The next is to Mr. Campkin, who was at this time making an index to a book on the Archæology of Sussex.

March 14, 1875.

MY DEAR CAMPKIN,—Your pleasant budget of prose and verse was jolly to read in bed on a dull Sunday morning, when our one monotonous bell cacophonously calls us to church.

Those verses in “*Adversaria*” are Annie S—y’s, and the rest are just as good. You shall read them in Knowl Hill Rhymes when you fling aside your big Index and come and see

MORTIMER AND FRANCES.

February 27, 1875.

DEAR TOWNSHEND MAYER,—The *St. James’s* for March has reached me, for the which, thanks. Of course it does not as yet in any way represent your editorial conception.

I don’t think the general public will care much for impracticable proposals like that of my old friend S—.

In this parish of about 850 inhabitants, there are eleven public-houses and beershops . . . one to about 16 adult males. If a Bill were brought in by which this excess could be reduced throughout the country, moderate men would support it. Why should not the inhabitants, instead of the county magistrates, decide whether a new house is necessary, or whether a licence should be removed? Note this significant fact or sorites of facts. The majority of houses belong to the brewers. In the country almost all brewers are bankers. Few J.P.'s can be found who do not wish to be on good terms with their bankers.

Yours,

MORTIMER COLLINS.

After this letter I think I may quote a few lines from "Adversaria" on Temperance, March 6th.

Sir Wilfrid Lawson, when the Bill was brought in for closing the Custom Houses on Bank Holidays, said he thought it would be well to close the public-houses also. This shows how intemperate temperance makes men. Sir Wilfrid has no sympathy for the man who on his rare holiday walks a dozen or a couple of dozen miles, and is glad of a pint of honest English ale thereafter.

Sir Wilfrid has caught the spirit of Joe Miller, and

gives us *crambe recoccta* in the form of ghostly old jokes; but possibly a bottle of dry champagne might make him really brilliant. There is one consideration that seems not to occur to him; that indeed he is not in a position to realize. Born to great estates, he has never known a money trouble. He is unable to conceive the condition of a man who, though he cannot pay for a dinner, can buy a glass of ale.

What use is a crusade against brewers' monopoly, and parochial veto on the magistrates' licensing powers? Were I a country gentleman, I would brew first-class ale, and supply all my tenants and dependents at cost price. There could be no better cure for Radicalism, which is, I think, due in a great measure to gin-drinking.

From "Adversaria" of March 20th I quote three paragraphs which give some notion of our poet's ways and sympathies.

I have just been cutting some trees. As I write I see the chips flying from a fir that long has taken all the strength out of the lawn at the point where it stood. The wielder of the axe, a namesake of mine, by the way, though whether kinsman or not I cannot guess, would in my judgment beat Mr. Gladstone himself in dis-establishing trees. He works with a will. Firs, I find, have no tap-roots, but run out lateral roots to a great

extent, whence they ought never to be grown on lawns. My woodcutter seems to find it requisite to refresh himself very frequently at the adjacent hostelry, which bears the poetic name of "The Seven Stars," and is kept by a man just like the portrait of Daniel Lambert on Ludgate Hill. (does it still exist?), all but the pleasant expression of countenance. I wonder does Mr. Gladstone take a "peck" jar of old ale out with him when he goes to thin the Hawarden woodlands?

The close time for wild birds began last Monday, the 15th of March. I hope all my readers who live in the country will take care that the bucolic louts do not shoot down the beautiful birds whom the law protects. I have for many years been pleading the cause of the "angels of the air" in prose and verse; perchance now that the Baroness Burdett Coutts has taken up the question, it may become fashionable not to wear feathers in the dainty hats and bonnets with which ladies adorn themselves. Kingfishers' plumage looks pretty in a hat; but how would the lovely wearer like to see a kingfisher shot as he flies across the river, looking like a feathered fragment of rainbow? Would she not shed a tear or two for the glorious bird's lonely mate?

I don't know when Sir John Lubbock's Bill for the Preservation of Ancient Monuments comes on, but it has my best wishes. Most important is it that all our great relics, from Stonehenge downwards, should be carefully guarded. I, who have walked through most

English shires, and searched for all possible records of the heroic and religious past, feel that I have a right to speak strongly on the topic. Indeed, I should rather like to be a Curator of Ancient Monuments, at a reasonable salary. It would be great fun in fine weather.

The following verses evidently refer to the day when the writer was cutting down the trees mentioned in "Adversaria."

LOUISA, you're a naughty child,
 To say my hand was shaking,
 Because upon me Bacchus smiled,
 When you my queen were taking !

When you are thoroughly awake,
 And find out every error,
 Staunton himself at chess might quake,
 And feel a mortal terror.

The simple truth—now do not frown—
 Will prove that you're suspicious :
 I had been cutting branches down,
 Like Gladstone—the capricious.

The hand that guides the fluent pen,
 For the axe needs other muscles ;
 The poet's nerves grow tremulous when
 With a tough tree he tussles.

But you, who conquer me at chess,
Have an effect more weighty,
And when you put me in a mess,
Whispers I hear of Ate.

What wonder, when I saw my fate,
I could not well dissemble ?
Is not that awful word, checkmate,
Enough to make one tremble ?

M. C.

The next piece, which I take from the "Loiterer" of the 20th of March, is perhaps worth quoting.

"A she-correspondent for me, always provided she doesn't cross," said (I think) Isaac Disraeli. How heartily I agree with him ! The fact is more manifest now-a-days, when the men who can write good letters to their friends have seldom leisure to do it. I am fortunate in having several "she-correspondents" (don't scowl), O critic ! I am "the marriedest of men," (as poor dear Bob Brough put it in one of his choicest rhymes) and they generally send me something pleasant. This morning, for example, a lady writes: "What grievous sin has the nation committed that we are afflicted with this weather ? If Gladstone were in office I could understand it, but with a Tory Government one expects better things." There's a little Tory for

you! Surely Disraeli is wise in supporting Forsyth's Bill, if the ladies are all going to vote for him. That they will seems clear. He is quite the ladies' man among Prime Ministers, if only as the author of *Henrietta Temple*, the most sentimental of love stories, yet fuller of real comedy than a play of Sheridan's. Often I take down my copy to look at some of the conversation, it is a part of a set that I picked up by accident which belonged to the Premier's butler, who bore the appropriate name of Grapes. How charming is Count Mirabel—a reflex of the inimitable D'Orsay, to whom the book was dedicated. "Fancy," he says, "a man ever being in low spirits. Life is too short for such *bêtises*. The most unfortunate wretch alive calculates unconsciously that it is better to live than to die. . . . The sun shines on all; every man can go to sleep; if you cannot ride a fine horse it is something to look upon one; if you have not a fine dinner, there is some amusement in a crust of bread and *gruyère*." And again, when Count Mirabel is asked whether he is not afraid of being bored, he replies, "I do not understand what this being bored is. He who is bored appears to me a bore. To be bored supposes the inability of being amused; you must be a dull fellow." Doubtless a fair sketch of Count d'Orsay's character. One thing is quite clear to any reader of *Henrietta Temple*, Disraeli is the ladies' premier. No Prime Minister of England ever wrote such a charming love-story, or any love-story at all so far as I remember.

Here is another scrap from another she-correspondent, received this morning, suggestive in its way :—“The Vicar of W. has joined the Band of Hope Temperance Society. . . . By-the-bye, the curious part of the business is, that he invests the greater part of his money in a monster brewery! This is a fact.” What are the hopes of the Church when clerical gentlemen do this sort of thing? I have always held that a priest in holy orders ought to belong to no society whatsoever, save that supreme society in which he holds dignity and responsibility. If the Church of England cannot make men temperate, will the Good Templars or the Band of Hope be likely to do so? It is painful to think that the old-fashioned parsons are passing away, and that when the question of disestablishment is forced to the front, there will be such an amount of clerical silliness to urge in its favour.

“Sir Everard Eresby” mentioned in the next is the name of a poem by Mortimer Collins, which was printed in the *St. James's Magazine*. “The Ladder of Light” was never finished, but is a pretty fragment.

March 21, 1875.

DEAR TOWNSEND MAYER,—I need hardly say that I am well pleased you like “Sir Everard Eresby” so much. If the public are equally able to appreciate, I could at

at a reasonable interval send you another longish poem, "The Ladder of Light." It is not yet finished.

I have retained your revise, being glad of a copy. If the sheet is not worked off, I may note that the printer has omitted inverted commas before "She was kin of mine" . . . (p.6); also that on p. 5, l. 2, *debonair* should be in Roman letters. The word is used by Chaucer, Milton (the "Allegro"), and Dryden, and is therefore no alien. I am strongly in favour of preserving old English words which the ruck of writers are apt to drop. Shakespeare used 15,000 words, Milton about 8000; a common day-labourer seldom gets beyond 300. Mr. Gladstone's speeches are reckoned to contain 10,000. The three pages of Mr. Paget's article seem to show that it is of great value. What he says of "middle-class niggardliness and ignorance" is only too true. We are too much under the thumb of these mere hucksters, who are filling the House of Commons with atrocious dulness and self-interest. It is six years since I described them in a letter to Disraeli

Brewers and bankers, men of odious omen,
Auriferous fellows of immense abdomen,
Flashy directors, with their diamond rings—
Such are the mass of our six hundred kings.

Things are now worse.

When Mr. Paget says (p. 14), "The column was no match for the line," he might have indicated that it

requires a thoroughly gallant race to fight in line, which is obviously the finest military method. The phalanx of Pyrrhus was better than the column: but if you can get men brave enough to advance in line without funk, and to form in square when stout resistance is necessary, you multiply your army by ten. One brave man is worth any number of cowards, who fly like sheep in a panic.

Forgive prolixity and scribbling paper, also heterography, if there is any, for I can never spell in an east wind.

Ever yours,

MORTIMER COLLINS.

In March, 1875, Mortimer wrote some lines for the Secretary to Mr. Clement Scott, inviting him to the Cottage.

Near Maidenhead Thicket a nightingale sings
To a Union Club poet; she hasn't got wings,
But she has got a nest where, in fortunate times,
There are poets who come and are brimful of rhymes,
And she says when the flowery Aprilis is here,
And the cuckoo comes in with the sweet of the year,
She hopes he'll run down for a dinner and bed,
And bring all the nonsense he has in his head.

'Tis a queer little cottage full kiss'd by the sun,
Where hard work is oftentimes varied by fun,

When the Master declares, Epicurean sinner,
 He can't write a sentence without a good dinner ;
 Where friends come and go in the merriest way,
 And are always quite full of their larks while they stay,
 Where C. S. for a time [let us hope it] may be
 Not very much bored with,

His truly,

F. C.

P.S. As your crest is an Owl, let me say
 I can show you some owls when you wander this way,
 'Tis the bird of 'Αθήνη γλαυκῶπις, and Fame
 Has chaff'd me ere now with that blue-stocking name ;
 But I never try tragedy, epic, or ballad,
 And prefer being famed for a smile or a salad.

March 26, 1875.

MY DEAR TOWNSHEND MAYER,—I feel prosy this Good Friday midnight (it is a dull day in the country), and I feel disposed to inflict some of my prosiness on you. Please forgive my vile paper, for I write in my bedroom, and I could find no other without disturbing my wife (who is in the Land of Nod) by going downstairs. When you come down here you will, I think, approve a bedroom I have had built specially for night-work, of which I often do a great deal : indeed in summer I don't knock off till between three and four. By the way, of course bring Paget, especially if he doesn't mind sleeping in the wine-cellar.

I heartily hope the *St. James's* will succeed. Charles Reade's delightfully murderous attack on me and my wife will become intelligible to you if you look at this week's *Athenæum*. I agree with you that he has definite power: but has he created a *character*? That is the crucial test of a novelist. I am obliged to you for an offer of a word in the *Olla*, but I fear, if I deal with him as you suggest, it will look as if I were puffing myself, specially as my new book, "Sweet and Twenty," is out on April 9. Edmund Yates (do you know him?) wants me to reply in the *World*, but I think not. Still, much will depend on what next he, C. R., says after my wife's letter in this week's *Athenæum*. One oughtn't to praise one's wife, but I think she has a terse and clear way of putting things.

I've for years had a great notion of a series of quasi-Horatian epistles, touching matters social and literary, and, not too freely, matters political. They might be addressed sometimes to real, sometimes to imaginary characters. Would you like me to try one or two? You see they could be stopped at once if the public objected.

I feel a very strong sympathy with you, working so bravely under such terribly weakening physical trials. You must have a glorious courage! I should have given up long ago. Your case, my dear friend (if I may so call you), is a noble proof of the soul's supremacy, and thence of its immortality. You are a martyr

to some physical evil, but it is conquered by the freshly implanted divine spirit. I have had my fights, as most men of letters have, but I cannot understand your indomitable gallantry. You are a stronger soldier in the Army of Light than I could be.

I have a strong feeling, which I swear you will share, that fiction should be healthy. I did not take to fiction till after a long pull at journalism, and then it was against the grain. However, there were opportunities, and I believe I have now written about a dozen novels; but the fights I have had with my publishers would amuse you. I am *too* something . . . classical, eccentric, amorous, indecorous—Heaven knows what! Then, having been a Tory editor all my life, of course the Radical critics were instructed to abuse me; and I have always thought the most delightful thing I know in criticism was about a novel (I forget which) in the *Saturday*. I quoted a line from Catullus, in which occurred the word *mens*; the printer turned the *n*, and made *meus* of it. The *Saturday* good-naturedly remarked that anything that distantly resembled Latin would suit Mr. Collins.

I quite look forward to your coming down here when the weather improves, and I think it will improve soon, for I have already had nightingales in my trees—the earliest I remember. It is recorded as a great wickedness of mine, that one spring morning a few years ago the nightingales awoke me at about four in

the morning, and I turned in a half-sleep and exclaimed, "D——n those nightingales!" Would that do as the basis of a poem to be called the "Poet's Anathema"? Queer pendant to Keats's divine ode, especially if done in the same metre.

Yours, *à él,*

MORTIMER COLLINS.

The Horatian Epistles alluded to in the last letter were not done for the *St. James's Magazine*, as Mr. Townshend Mayer's politics were different from Mortimer Collins's.

Some twelve months later than this date, Mortimer proposed to Mr. Fred. Locker that they should write Horatian Epistles to one another in one of the Magazines, and Mr. Locker seemed to fall in with the idea at the time; but Mortimer Collins did not live to carry it out.

The next sentence is from "Adversaria," of March 27th.

My tortoise, who has lived on nothing in the greenhouse all the winter, is now prowling about the lawn, and wildly dissipating on dandelion leaves. What a strange torpid existence creatures of this sort seem to

lead! They are meant for a lesson to us, doubtless; and I realize the extremes of movement when I see in the blue sky my carrier pigeons whirling at about a mile a minute, and on the green turf my tortoise walking about a foot in the same time. Well, according to the Homeric hymn, the tortoise suggested the idea of the lyre to Hermes, son of Maïa, swiftest-winged of gods; so extremes meet in many ways.

On March 27th there was a letter in the *Times*, in which Mortimer Collins describes his garden. I am endeavouring to give a picture of his life in his own words so far as I can, as it will be much better than anything I could express concerning him, therefore I quote what seems to me to best carry out my scheme.

Although the succession of easterly wind has kept back the spring flowers, the birds appear to be arriving early and breaking early into song. This year there will be no need to quote Plautus—

“Metuo ne lusciniolæ defuerit cantio;”

for last evening two young nightingales were singing against each other in my trees. The earliest date given by Gilbert White, of Selborne, for the nightingale is the 1st of April; the latest, the 1st of May.

I heard what White aptly calls the willow-wren's

“shivering note” on the 20th of March. The earliest date he records is the 17th of April, the latest the 7th of May.

Sir John Lubbock, in his charming work on the relation between insects and wild flowers, says (p. 53), —“*Anthophora pilipes* and *bombus hortorum* are the only two North European insects which have a proboscis long enough to reach to the end of the spur of *Delphinium elatum*. *A. pilipes*, however, is a spring insect, and has already disappeared before the *Delphinium* comes into flower, which seems to depend for its fertilization entirely on *bombus hortorum*.”

Yet yesterday a pair of insects that strongly resembled the male and female *bombus* were flitting over my hyacinths. I mention this as a matter of suggestion to lovers of out-door science. A skilled writer might treat as wisely the connexion of birds with insects as Sir John Lubbock has treated that of insects with flowers. I am no “ologist” of any kind, I regret to say, but merely one who loves in leisure moments to witness

“The admirable drama of small things.”

It may be worth notice that my garden is not quite an acre, close to the high road on one side and to a frequented by-way on the other. Some people, probably, would scarce believe how much life in bird and insect and flower so small a space may include.

MORTIMER COLLINS.

Knowl Hill, Berks, Lady Day.

The next is to Miss L. C.

S. Balbina.

Learn Latin by all means, dear Louisa, and when you have learnt it, I will show you what to read. Why shouldn't Greek follow ?

Frances says, "Bring your needle;" of course we both say, "Bring yourself also, and we hope yourself will be healthy and jolly and poetic."

Lusciniola is the diminutive of luscinia, and means a young nightingale. Astaci and Astu have no connexion. Astacus is a lobster; Astu is a name for the City of Athens, even as we call London, Town. It means, in fact, THE town. As to "growing slow," we'll discuss "thick" as they say in Wilts, to-morrow.

MORTIMER AND FRANCES.

P.S. Frances is not very well, I grieve to say. I hope to get to London soon for a few days, which will do her good, I know.

CHAPTER II.

APRIL, 1875.

IN April, 1875, was published "Sweet and Twenty" [Hurst and Blackett]. There are in this, as in most of Mortimer Collins's works, several personal sketches. The Canon Tremain of the book was the Rev. R. S. Hawker, of Morwenstow, the Cornish poet.

The dedication is to one whom Mortimer Collins counted amongst his most intimate friends, who was a very frequent visitor at the Cottage, and an old friend of the author's wife :—

DEAR CHARLIE,—Will you look with favouring eyes
Upon a book wherein some things are new,
Mingled with sketches you will recognize?—
A book I gladly dedicate to you.

Although in civic business deep immersed,
 Truly you love the *dolce far niente*,
 And for idyllic scenes full often thirst—
 Green lawns and laziness and SWEET AND TWENTY.

Yet there's another reason, this above,
 Why I assail you with a Dedication :
 'Tis that you love the lady whom I love,—
 “ To love her is a liberal education.”

This novel is, perhaps, more carefully worked out than most of the others, but it has the same eccentric and poetic characters in it. Miss Litton and Fiddler Carr are very prettily described.

I will quote a few sentences, where the author expresses his own opinions on any subject. He says,—

The human race, of both sexes, may be divided in two classes—those who grow fast, and those who grow slow. The second are, as a rule, the more valuable. The oak of England, tardy in its growth, is of greater worth than the gourd of the prophet who amazed Nineveh, or than the shrub Khardal, erroneously recorded as mustard in the Gospel. You will often

meet a weedy boy of sixteen or seventeen, who has already "seen life," by which he means experimenting on its vices, and who is in a chronic state of beer and tobacco. He lounges about the stables and is familiar with the grooms, is even more familiar with the female servants. He knows more than a healthy, well-trained young fellow of twenty; he will probably die early or live a scamp.

In another place he says,—

There are cities that become ideas. If you utter the word Rome *three* ideas pass through the mind—conquest, debauchery, superstition. A city is not a mere geographical expression, or the accident of a river. If a competent historian could find sufficient materials for the history of London for about twelve centuries, it would be a book of delicious fascination. I fear that both historian and materials are wanting. What is London? England, with all England's imperial dependencies crystallized into the smallest space possible.

* * * * *

It is strange that England, which has produced the greatest of poets, has not yet had a great architect. Wren was a fine imitator, but cannot we English set up a Michael Angelo of our own? I fancy our finest geniuses in architecture have never caught their chance.

Architecture is a supreme art, and no man can be an architect without the true poetic faculty. Sculpture and painting are subordinate to it. Music is meant to move in mighty edifices. The great architect has great work to do.

In another place, talking of a woman with a temper, he says,—

A woman who can't scold is never of much use. I like a woman *with a temper*. Its very existence shows that she loves her husband and children.

Here is a pretty little bit of nature-painting, in which the author was always so happy:—

He sat down on the bank under a great beech-tree, with a white, straight stem like a column. She stood before him like a school-girl before her master. It was a pleasant, cool, solitary corner, with leaves above and moss below, and a little river rippling softly over the arrowy water-weeds. Now and then a swallow dipped or a fish sprang to the surface. A great dragon-fly balanced himself in air for awhile, then suddenly darted into indefinite space. An unseen lark sang high above.

And, again, he talks of—

The beautiful fretwork of an October hoarfrost upon

the grass, and the furze bushes, while the larks sang invisibly, and the bullfinches fluted from the dog-rose sprays.

And, again, he speaks of—

Flowers that smelt all the more delicious because the dew-pearls of night were just touched by the delicious warmth of dawn.

In another place he says,—

It must be remembered that there is a vast difference between the agony of a high nature and the anguish of a low nature. In one case there is unconquerable resistance—in the other early submission.

Mortimer Collins's readers will, I think, all agree that he had a high conception of women. There is an epigrammatic sentence in the first volume of "Sweet and Twenty" which is a most perfect description of a true woman. He says,—

The old lady of Westbury recognized in her the true type of womanhood, calm at the core amid all its vivacity, free from all affectation, and superior to all sentiment.

In another place he says,—

As there are countries in which certain plants cannot grow, so there are minds to which certain ideas are incommunicable. Tolerance in a Roman Catholic or a Calvinistic brain is as devoid of possibility as the growth of the date-palm in England. To implant the idea of loyalty in a French brain is as difficult as to make our English oak flourish in France; while to make the average Englishman believe in equality would be harder than to grow a grape here that would make claret.

In describing a cathedral, which in "Sweet and Twenty" he calls Northminster, he says,—

Every old cathedral has its special character, suggested doubtless in the first instance to the architect by the character of the people and the place. Northminster strikes you by a somewhat sullen grandeur; all its arches are heavy; its ornamentation is on a broad scale; its windows are full of the deepest colour; its peal of bells is on a mighty scale; its two towers (especially the elder) might be living rocks defying all the passion of the sea. As you look at Northminster Cathedral, you cannot believe the church that built it will pass away. There is a sign of permanence in it.

In the next sentence I quote, the author well

describes himself. He would see a myriad things when out walking, and would point out many beauties or curiosities which his companions would pass without observing; and his remarks were not dry and learned, as if he were well up in all the "ologies." He knew Nature intuitively and by observation, and was happy in such knowledge.

To the man who thinks, every fresh face is a new science. A walk of a dozen miles will give to such a man as many original thoughts as are contained in any book he is likely to read. The skylark has a message for him, the beech-tree an idea. But there are those who cannot pass certain limits; within those limits they are brilliant fellows, and beyond them as dull as a secondhand bookseller's clearance catalogue.

Who but a lover of birds could thus describe a wren's nest?—

A wren, no bigger than her little finger, with a nest deep, deep in the warm hedge moss, and a lot of little spotted eggs that will soon be molecules of music wrapped in feathers.

And, again, the next few lines :—

On the stone water-vase stood a crimson-breasted robin, looking ruefully at the snow, and wishing he had a worm for breakfast. A pair of blackbirds had come close to the house, and were probing the ground where the holly had kept the snow from entirely obscuring the turf; *the cock, true sable with a yellow bill, the hen, soft brown with a dim orange breast.*

Mortimer often broke into measured lines, like the last two, although I have heard him say that he did not consider it correct to do so.

The following bit will remind many, who knew the author, of hot days on the lawn at Knowl Hill, when Mortimer was full of brilliant wit and verse, when he made every one around him feel that life was a poem :—

It was glorious August weather, too hot to sit out of doors except in the shade—weather that stimulates the brain, while it makes the hand indolent; weather for wit that shall never be printed, for songs to be sung once and never again. No wave of ether stirred. The great trees around Westbury Place slept and were silent. The birds were too lazy to sing after matins.

And then, again, the following description of

winter, where the author, in the very joy of his heart, breaks out irrepressibly into verse:—

The fire burnt frostily. Out of doors our friend Helios, lord of health and joy, was doing his utmost to melt the ice. Very calm was the day; not a breath of air stirred. The outside chill and the inside comfort were in absolute antithesis. A defiant kettle sang upon a trivet,—

Who cares for winter
While there's a splinter
Of oak to be burnt anywhere?
While the good trees grow,
We can baffle the snow,
And laugh at the frost in the air.

The next sentence was written, apropos of one of the characters in "Sweet and Twenty," who was expelled from the University:—

It would be better if the University, instead of expelling a brilliant undergraduate who takes to atheism (the measles of the mind), could flog him into common sense.

In all his later works Mortimer Collins is very happy in his conception of women:—

There is a fine line of Byron's—

"The mind, the music breathing from her face,"

which admirably shows the highest conceivable class of beauty—the beauty wherein you think not what colour a woman's hair, or whether her eyes be grey or azure or hazel, or whether her bosom has a soft curve, her hand a graceful form, her body altogether an easy lissom grace. All about her is the product of her unseen spirit, which shapes her into loveliness, and gives music to her voice . . .

The next sentence is a perfect epigram on woman, and is worth remembering:—

The trinity of womanhood which Paris had to disentangle is immensely ancient and intensely modern. You cannot worship a woman who has not a touch of Hera, nor live with her intelligently unless she has a touch of Athene, nor love her to the very heart unless she has a touch of Aphrodite.

The next few lines are, perhaps, worth quoting, as showing the author's opinions:—

It has been remarked that people who write plays and novels fall into their chief mistakes by giving more weight to the unlikeness that there is between human beings than to their likeness to each other; but the likeness is far greater than the unlikeness, and must be

thus regarded by the true artist. The author who takes hold of a single dominant quality, and forms it into a man or woman, is simply a caricaturist, and might just as well label his characters with names that would indicate them.

The greatest character created by Shakespeare, Hamlet, Prince of Denmark, puzzles the critics and baffles the actors because he is so very human. He does first what any man would do who was clear-sighted yet superstitious; loyal to his father's memory, yet loving his mother; a prince every inch of him, yet fond of easy intercourse with other men; a true lover of a lady, yet desirous that no other creature should be drawn into the whirlpool of misery which he saw before him. Now there is more humanity in the greatest poet than there is poetry, and in the greatest mathematician than there is mathematics, and in the noisiest costermonger than there is costermongering; and my experience leads me to think that the same may be said of lawyers, stockbrokers, critics, and other abused classes. We must draw the line, I suppose, at the "*generatores qui in odia hominum incurrunt*"—at the *leno communis pernicies adolescentium*.

Writing on Christmas in "Sweet and Twenty," the author says,—

Sagacious friends of mine severely ask me, What is

the use of the follies of Christmas ? The answer is easy. We are burdened with the enormous work of the world. A year now holds ten times the work for any energetic brain that it held a century ago. It is an absolute delight to have a time when the wisest of us all can play the fool at his pleasure. The Romans recognized this in their Saturnalia. We might with advantage extend our holidays ; and thanks to Sir John Lubbock and his associates, something has been recently done in this direction ; but it is quite clear that more might be done. The world should have a week's idleness at Christmas, and the rich should make that Yule-tide joyous for the poor. If you are a Christian, gentle reader, keep this wintry tide in such a way as to do good to your fellow-creatures ; if you are not a Christian, show a good example to those who are.

Mortimer Collins shows all through his writings his love for ancient Greece and all things Grecian. Probably not every one will agree with the sentiments in the next passage I quote :—

Greece and Rome have both left their mark on the world ; but which was the greater ? Greece, surely. Had not Aristophanes lived, that empire of the world that was won by Rome would have been won by Athens.

The great Tory poet and wit ruined by his ridicule the schemes of Alcibiades, who otherwise would have conquered Carthage and Italy, outdone all the Scipios and Cæsars, and made Athens the omphalos of the world. Aristophanes changed the current of events and gave Rome its chance. It was a definite misfortune for the world. Athens could never have fallen to the level of Caligula's Rome; and when Christianity came upon the world with its flood of light, it would have been more reasonably understood by the appreciative Greeks. Bigotry could not have fastened on the City of the Violet Crown. A Pope of Rome came naturally enough after a series of debauched and bestial emperors. But the lucent atmosphere of Athens would poison a Pope.

The following might well serve for a description of the author's own garden :—

They went down to a pretty lime walk at one side of the lawn. There was a single row of limes, which threw their branches right over the path and on to the lawn, so that they formed a pretty avenue. There was the buzz of innumerable bees in the trees.

In the second volume of "Sweet and Twenty" there is an excellent and faithful picture of the late Rev. R. S. Hawker in his home at Mor-

wenstow. When Mr. Hawker died, a year ago, two gentlemen thought it worth while to write each a biography of him. These biographies caused much dispute; there was a long correspondence in the papers about them. Some of Mr. Hawker's friends consider that Mortimer Collins has given in Canon Tremaine a truer portrait of the poetic Cornishman than either of his biographers have done.

Mortimer Collins had always a strong feeling against Dissent, and expressed it often.

In the next lines I quote he is writing with reference to Irontown in "Sweet and Twenty."

"It is in these towns of rapid and recent growth that the seeds of Dissent are so easily grown. The population becomes too large for the vicar to care for personally. Little colonies of cottages arise at a distance from the church, and some little Bethelite from a neighbouring town comes on a Sunday afternoon, and chooses a spot of ground where he can easily gather a crowd, and preaches what he chooses to call "the Gospel." His idea of the Gospel generally consists in bawling out, at the top of his voice, a few sentences about eternal damnation and everlasting fire. By putting a great

deal of emphasis on these unpleasant words he makes a great deal of effect, and a lot of hysterical women are "converted," or "called," or whatever the phrase is, and in time a chapel is built.

I next quote from the *Loiterer* of April 3rd—

To me Easter Monday is no more a holiday than any other day; but, then, to me all days on which I have health and sunshine are holidays, for I love my work, and I wholly agree in the great saying, *Laborare est orare*. I add, *Laborare est vivere*. People are so seldom content. A skilled artisan told me he would like to be a clerk; a bank clerk, he would like to be an actor or or a scene-painter. Now, to such folk I commend the homely words of the Church Catechism: "Do your duty in that state of life unto which it hath pleased God to call you." Heaven forbid I should discourage a noble, healthy ambition; but ambition will find an opportunity, while the morbid craving for change often leads to disaster.

In a letter which was published in the *Times* last Saturday I noted, that I had heard the nightingale and the willow-wren much earlier than in any previous year, and I think that birds and insects this year are curiously early, though flowers are late. If Gilbert White of Selborne were alive, he would make a capital presi-

dent for a society to be spread over England, and extended in time wherever Englishmen dwell, which should take accurate record of all ornithic, entomic, and botanic facts. The connexion between birds, insects, and flowers is so suggestive, that really I think such a society should be started. I have not thought of a brief name for it. I have thought of a president—Sir John Lubbock is the very man, as we cannot resuscitate dear Gilbert White. Such a society would have a wide field of investigation in the changes of the years. When we learn from Sir John Lubbock that there is an orchis which cannot live without the wasp to impregnate it, we have a faint clue to innumerable facts which can only be reduced to scientific system by wide observation and careful induction. Every year varies in its product of birds, insects, and flowers. I have heard it remarked that hornets are numerous about once in four years. This year is a good one for crocuses, a bad one for hyacinths. These subtle operations of nature are well worth investigation, *for the more we know of the working of the world the nearer we are to the Maker of the world.* So I wish somebody would inaugurate (I believe that's the penny-a-liner's word) the society I propose. The copyright is not reserved.

Mortimer Collins's letter to the *Times*, saying he had heard the nightingale on March 24th,

seems to have caused remark. Any one who knew him intimately would never doubt his observations on birds. He was always most accurate. On this occasion he not only heard, but *saw* the nightingale:—

I am the quietest man in the world, yet people will try to quarrel with me. The *Gardener's Magazine* is terribly angry with me, because I happened to hear young nightingales singing on March 24th. It is an early date; had I not learnt the note of the nightingale in my boyhood, when I went to search for bee and butterfly-orchises in Nightingale Valley, Clifton, I might be doubtful. But I live in a vicinage beloved by nightingales, and where they often keep me awake at night. It is suggested by my critic that perchance I heard "two thrushes, or two woodlarks, or two robins, or two blackbirds." If he were on my lawn for half an hour he would know that no such mistake could well be made. Three robins talk to me as I pass under the trees, and I know their several notes. I have blackbirds, and thrushes, and missel-thrushes, and know their beautiful voices perfectly. No, it won't do. Ornithology is not an exact science. I have heard the same birds since.

The editor of the *Gardener's Magazine*, Mr. Shirley Hibberd, is a gentleman for whose work in the world

I have high respect. His books are on my shelves. But he ought not to permit a contributor to imagine that there was any epigram in "!!!". No number of notes of "admiration" (*sic*) will make an epigram. That I heard the nightingale a few days earlier than Gilbert White is certain, and is worth recording in connexion with this curious season. My critic is tremendously severe on me because I say they were *young* nightingales, and jumps to the conclusion that they were this year's birds. If I called somebody a young girl, would it mean she was a baby in long clothes? By a young nightingale I mean a last year's bird, whose song is imperfect for want of practice. All song-birds begin tentatively, and improve as they grow older. The young thrushes get finer song every day, as I have reason to remark just now.

My critic says that "The nightingale of the newspapers sings *a month or two* in advance of the Philomela of poets and naturalists, and is audible only to those who cultivate the *belles lettres*," &c., &c. I am amused to see poetry put on one side and the *belles lettres* (an obsolete foreign term) on the other. I should have thought that the accomplished editor of the journal in question, who has *himself* "cultivated the *belles lettres*," would hardly have treated with absolute contempt the independent observation of one who, though no ornithologist, is philornithic, and who, perhaps, knows more about nightingales than most

men. I have been brought into contact with several wonderful snarers of the *luscinia*, and when there's nothing else to write may possibly loiter among my ornithic reminiscences. And at this moment, if anybody wants a nightingale, I can tell him where one is to be found. The gentlemen who abuse me in the papers are almost always kind enough to send me a copy of their paper, and for this I am much obliged. After more than a quarter century of strenuous journalism it would be strange if I had not trod on somebody's literary or political corns, since at all times I have spoken out my mind. Well, I get my critics and criticisms, and hope I profit by them, since it is never too late to mend, as Mr. Charles Reade has remarked—since also that in my belief the criticisms of the lowest creatures are worth calm consideration from the higher. If a man could get at the opinion of his horse or dog, or even his pig, as to his actions, it would be worth his while to think over it. In the same way the general judgments of inferior people, even if hostile and splenetic, are worth weighing. I am much obliged by any one who criticasters me as savagely as he pleases in print, if only he will put a little intelligence into his criticism and teach me something. No one who attacks me need be afraid of an action-at-law, even should he declare that I murdered my great-grandmother. These things right themselves, and when I see London journalists raking up an old book of mine (which had

its follies) I am simply amused. Let them laugh at me: why not? A lustrum and more has passed. "I am no more ashamed of having been a Republican," said Southey, "than I am of having been a boy." And I am no more ashamed of having written a certain book, which these people bring up against me at intervals, than Mr. Gladstone is of "The Church considered in its relations with the State" (1840), or Mr. Disraeli of "Vivian Grey" (1825). A man whose youth has no follies will in his maturity have no power. *Sic itur ad astra*. Sow your wild oats and grow the wheat of wealth or the glorious grapes of genius.

* * * * *

I desire to gossip cheerily, and not to quarrel; but I have the courage of my opinions, and will always defend the Crown, the Church, and the ladies. Gentlemen can take care of themselves.

In "Adversaria" of April 10, Mortimer Collins writes prettily concerning a monument to his favourite, Gilbert White:—

Dear Gilbert White is to be remembered by a restoration of Selborne Church, to which Magdalen College gives 250*l.*, and Lord Selborne 100*l.* There is also to be a cross to his memory. I wonder what he would have best liked as a memorial? No such lover

of nature have we had: he was the Shakespeare of birds. Were there a Chantry to carve birds in white marble, in memory of him, it would be opportune. Is there no sculptor who could adorn that cross which is to be erected on the plaster with a flying swallow in marble of Sicily? I don't see why his observations of flowers and birds should not be recorded on the cross which is to do him honour.

The following letter was written to Mr. Frowde on hearing that he, as youngest bachelor of the Stationers' Company, had to reply to the toast of "The Ladies:"—

April 11, 1875.

DEAR HARRY,—You'd rather be scorch'd up in Hades
Than have to get up and reply for the ladies:
Yet why? In bright eyes there's a theme to inspire you,
You're a handsome old owl, lots of women admire you,
To the things that you say are you thoroughly deaf—
Or is there a mystery—Mrs. H. F.?

Well, thanks for your lunch which cost nineteen and nine
Tho' the room was too dark, pretty bright was the wine;
And thanks for your sealing-wax red and immense,
Which was done before giants were in the past tense;
And thanks above all for yourself, my dear fellow;
We wish you'd come down to Knowl Hill and grow
mellow.

The next was to the editor of the *St. James's Magazine* :—

April 12, 1875.

MY DEAR TOWNSHEND MAYER,—By all means use *Iris* and *Echo* if you like it. A letter from my wife to you by this post was written yesterday, before we received Mrs. Mayer's.

By all means use also my scrap on Paget in *Olla*. I dare say he is right in assuming that squares are now obsolete or obsolescent, thanks to the dropping shell. But I am of opinion that we shall not find out the real meaning of modern changes in warfare till an English army is again in the field against European antagonists. No improvement in weapons can do away with the superiority of race over race; and England, which produced Nelson and Wellington, and many other great leaders, and blue-jackets and red-coats worthy to serve under them, will settle a good many naval and military questions in her next great war.

Always yours,

MORTIMER COLLINS.

The next is to Miss L. C., when she was suffering from a sore foot :—

S. Nicodemus.

So, pain has caught her in his clutches :
Louisa limps about on crutches !

Sad ! when the nightingale is singing,
And fragrant lily-bells are swinging,
And furze blooms bright (you know the reason)
To show that kissing is in season.

These sunny days will soon restore
The gaiety you had before,
The easy step of Nereid nymph
Who'd tasted Castaly's magic lymph—
I may be heathen (what will follow
From ——) I quite believe Apollo
Has strong recuperative force,
And uses it for you of course ;
And probably the reason is,
You're like his sister, Artemis,
Who, of the stronger sex defiant,
Preferr'd a poet to a giant.
And, aided by her wicked brother,
She kill'd the one and kiss'd the other.
You'll find the story, if you please,
In Ovid's Metamorphoses.

MORTIMER AND FRANCES.

It was about this time that Sir John Lubbock's Bill on Ancient Monuments came before the House. Mortimer Collins took very great interest in it, and hoped to see it pass satisfactorily. His enthusiasm on ancient monu-

ments can be seen from the incident which he relates in the next piece that I quote.

He had begun at this time to feel the pressure of continual work without holiday or change; so he wrote and asked the Premier, if the Bill should pass, to make him a curator of monuments. It would have been an office to suit him exactly, and for which he was adapted, and would have given him the change he so much needed. He wrote the following in the *Press* on April 17 :—

Whatever opinion may be general as to Sir John Lubbock's Bill on Ancient Monuments, there can be no question as to the poetry of the idea, or the pleasantry with which Sir John supported it. Of course the main difficulty is to reconcile the immediate rights of landowners with what may be called the historic rights of the people; but it seems to me that this reconciliation is easy enough, and that landowners will be glad of Government help to keep ancient remains intact. I remember when I was a mere boy threatening a fellow with a thrashing because he was chipping off a bit from one of the stones of Stonehenge; and although it is quite possible he might have thrashed *me*, I am happy to say that he did not try, and that he chipped no more

stone. But I fear the grand mysterious monument has been terribly quarried during the thirty years or so since that occurred. Not every vulgar picnicker finds himself confronted by a plucky school-boy, weedy but pretty long in his reach, who has grasped Sir John Lubbock's idea that Stonehenge is "enigmatical and unique," and who is willing to fight for such an idea. Now it strikes me that Sir Edmund Antrobus will be only too glad to have official aid in saving Stonehenge from gradual demolition. I cannot see why our great abbeys are to be left undefended by the curators or commissioners who may be appointed. I cannot understand why princely courtesy might not have placed the Duchy of Cornwall, full as it is of important relics, within the action of the measure. The fact, I suppose, is that certain official underlings don't want outsiders to meddle with their affairs. But if the Bill, amended as it must be in committee, goes to the Upper House, it would be a graceful thing for the Prince to suggest that the royal duchy should be included in the supervision.

The next piece, which was in "Adversaria" of April 24, I quote because Mortimer Collins talks so lovingly of his trees:—

It is curious to notice the magic of a night. One night's rain, and the trees are full of verdure. A red

chestnut opposite my window, which yesterday had close, compact buds only, is now stretching fans of green leaf towards the humid air. The expanding leaf of the red horse chestnut—improperly so-called, since it is the *Pavia rubra*, and not an *Aesculus*—seems like an aspiring hand spread forth to catch the sunlight and the dew.

“Time,” said Hooker, “is the measure of the motion of the spheres.” A better definition could not easily be framed. We divide our year’s earth-travel and day-travel, and do our work accordingly. The sixty per cent. bill-discounter probably does not consider that three silver full moons will have shone on lovers loitering in leafy lanes, amid sweet chorus of the nightingales, before he can issue his inevitable writ. It is wise to think of the comparative ages of the creatures God has created. A gnat dies in a day, while a tortoise lives two or three centuries. Doubtless, *pace* Darwin, these differences were instituted for man’s instruction. It is very sad, as I have lately proved, to lose by old age a dog that was yours in its youth. When a dog has been thirteen or fourteen years your friend you have melancholy pleasure in tending his old age. “Put him out of his misery,” says some well-meaning friend. I cannot see it. “The whole duty of a dog,” said Christopher North, “is to love man and to keep his commandments.” It is a clear corollary that man should act with God-like tenderness towards

his dogs. Now, we compare our tenure of life with the dog's, and the comparison is a silent sermon. What if we compare our life with that of a tree? Of course, we may premise Ben Jonson's lovely lines—

“ It is not growing like a tree
In bulk doth make men better be ;
Or standing like an oak three hundred year,
To fall a log at last, dry, bald, and sear :
A lily of a day
Is fairer far in May ;
Although it fall and die that night,
It was the plant and flower of light.”

As I write I see many trees that I have planted on my lawn, and wonder who will enjoy their shade and bloom in days far off. A distinguished naval officer recently had the courtesy to send me a paper on “ Indications of Spring,” read before the Royal Society, in 1789, by Robert Marsham, F.R.S., of Stratton, Norfolk. I find that he was a correspondent of Gilbert White, and a great planter of trees. “ An oak,” he writes, in 1790, “ which I planted in 1720 is become now, at one foot from the ground, twelve feet six inches in circumference ; and at fourteen feet (the half of the timber length) is eight feet two inches. But I did not begin with beech till 1741, and then by seed, so that my largest is now, at five feet from the ground, six feet three inches in girth, and with its head spreads a circle of twenty yards' diameter.”

Tityrus himself might have rejoiced in such a portentous beech grown in half a century. Mr. Marsham lived to ninety. To plant and care for trees is healthful work.

Shakespeare's birthday, which is also St. George's Day, was always kept at the Cottage, and some verses were usually written by Mortimer Collins to his Secretary in honour of it.

The *Laurus nobilis* set by Mortimer Collins in his garden, flourished well there, and doubtless flourishes yet. Some of his friends have grown the poet's laurel from slips of it.

From the *Loiterer* I quote the following:—

Friday, the 23rd of April, is Shakespeare's birthday. I think the birthday of England's greatest man ought to be a bank holiday, specially as it falls when "comes in the sweet o' the year," as the merry rogue Autolycus hath it. I am going to illustrate the event by a quiet little dinner, when libations shall be poured to a bust of the supreme poet, crowned with the *Laurus nobilis*, the poet's bay, that defies the lightning of Zeus. . . . There occurred to my memory the other day a capital thing of Shirley Brooks's worth preservation. I had occasion to send him a letter from an editorial friend who uses as crest a hand grasping a pen, with

the apt motto, *Hinc orior*. "An excellent device," wrote Shirley in reply, "but why does he spell *ink* with an *h*?" I call that as neat a classic pun as any of Porson's.

CHAPTER III.

MAY TO AUGUST, 1875.

IN May, 1875, one of the visitors to the Cottage was Mr. Littleton Hay. In returning to town, he lost his train at Twyford Station, and, while waiting, wrote some verses to Mortimer Collins describing his plight; he also made a sketch of himself sitting on the platform. The Twyford station was more than three miles from the Cottage, so he had walked very quickly in hopes of catching the train. In one verse he says,—

Then I sank on a bench like a rocket
 Burnt out. Oh! that tortuous seat!
Each bone seem'd to start from its socket,
 To find any rest was a feat—
 An almost impossible feat.

Mortimer Collins replied to him in the same metre,—

Your rhymes we have clearly decipher'd,
Your portraiture tells its own tale—
An unfortunate poet at Twyford—
Limp back upon sharp-cutting rail:
Your terrible fate we bewail.

We're sorry of course you were tortured,
But enjoyment is bought with a price,
And apples are crush'd from the orchard,
And poets are squeezed in their vice;
And cider and metre are nice.

Quoth Shelley, "We learn as we suffer,
Poor devils, and teach it in song,"
Which means that the poet is tougher
By far than the average throng,
Him Apollo's afflatus makes strong.

In youth he has voyaged his Odysseys,
In manhood has drunk with the gods,
Made love to the whole of the goddesses,
And smarted 'neath Venus's rods,
And said, "After all, what's the odds?"

So be careless as Phoibos Apollo
 Next time that you wander this way,
 And let it be long ere the swallow
 Has thought of his travelling day,
 For remember the summer brings *Hay*.

M. C.

P.S.—When you next cut a caper
 In verse, as you very soon will,
 Just write on one side of the paper,
 And your stanzas fair lasses to thrill
 Can be stuck in the Rhymes of Knowl Hill.

The next letter refers to an article which
 Mortimer Collins was about to write for the
St. James's Magazine.

DEAR TOWNSHEND MAYER,—To-day is my principal
Punch day, so I cannot manage anything in the way of
 copy. I have always heavy work on Thursday; but I
 think you may rely on me by Friday's post. The
Rugby Rebellion is the sort of thing I like to do at a
 heat. Your wife's letter was delightful. I hope her
 phrase about a pen that had never learnt spelling is
 not copyright, as I think it might be twisted into a
 gem of rhyme.

Yours always,

MORTIMER COLLINS.

Mr. and Mrs. Townshend Mayer were visitors at the cottage in May. This was their first meeting with Mortimer Collins, and I have often heard Mr. Townshend Mayer describe his feeling of astonishment at what happened. Being lame he is obliged to take an invalid carriage with him when he travels, and there is generally some difficulty in getting the carriage on to the top of a cab and off again. Even when there are two men there is great difficulty. He was sitting patiently in the cab, and the cabman was wondering however he should get the carriage down when Townshend Mayer saw a big fellow come out of the gate, and walk up to the cab and quietly lift down the carriage with one arm.

X
hen
I think if Mortimer was at all conceited it was of his bodily strength. † He was a little bit proud of such an incident as that.

use
to
ly
with
me
Then it was the greatest delight to him to take Townshend Mayer in his invalid carriage all over the neighbourhood. He would push the carriage along as fast as he could run, and do it with boyish glee.

— and it always seems more

Mr. Townshend Mayer was taken ill while staying at the cottage, and he often speaks enthusiastically of Mortimer's kind and thoughtful ways during his illness. When dinner was sent up to the invalid, Mortimer would always go out and pick some sweet-scented flowers to place on the tray.

Mr. Townshend Mayer reminds me of many such kindnesses, but those who have visited Mortimer Collins know how thoughtful he always was of every one around him.

The following I quote from "Adversaria" of June 5th.

Summer at last, apparently; but the wind lingereth in the east. There are people who don't seem the least to care from what quarter the wind blows, and I sometimes am tempted to wish I were one of them; but I change my mind when the sweet south arrives, for then I know that I have enjoyment which my pachydermatous fellow-mortals never can realize. Power of enjoyment and of suffering are in direct proportion. Talleyrand's theory, that all you want to be happy is a hard heart and a strong stomach, is quite true for Certain natures. They are as happy as they can be—

just like a pig in a sty; or the tortoise which I now see browsing on my lawn, and which simply sleeps through the winter in the greenhouse. But in contrast to that tortoise (from whose kinsman only Hermes could get music) there is a thrush on the very summit of a lime-tree, trying to deafen me in his delight at the glory of June. He is positively shouting his joy. Ha! and now a blackbird has begun to mock him with a mellow note, as if Rossini echoed Verdi. I daresay, in sharp winter, when the pig was warm in his sty, and the tortoise snug by the greenhouse flue, those two choristers of summer were glad to pick up crumbs at my window, and pined for their natural dinner of snails and worms. Yet, dear reader, which would you rather be? Pig or tortoise, mavis or merle?

These lines to Miss L. C. were probably written early in June. She had written from town, telling us she had seen some performing dogs.

Well, Louisa, lady fair,
How d'ye like the London air?
Do the queer performing dogs
Make you pleased with London fogs?
Do you give a thought sometimes
To the lawn beneath the limes,

Where, amid the twilight hushes,
Come the merry merles and thrushes ?

Have you, of the country weary,
Seen both Hamlet and Dundreary,
And declared, on lady's oath,
Shakespeare must have written both ?
Lord, when London life you've tasted,
How it seems the time is wasted !
Wagner's melodies grow pale
When you hear the nightingale :
Wren that through the laurels flits
Beats the Titiens into fits. ?

Go into the Ladies' Cage,
See debaters in a rage :
Is it not a prettier sight
Just to see two robins fight.
Swearing at each other freely
Like poor Whalley or Kenealy ?

Carleton Blyth, that coachman grand,
Hero of the four-in-hand,
Wants me, when the sun shall gleam,
To take a seat behind his team,
And after that, with pen industrious,
To put in print his name illustrious.
So I think I'll go next week :
Shall I for you the box bespeak

('Tis but an added half-a-crown)
 And give you lunch at Windsor Town ?

MORTIMER AND FRANCES.

The next was to Miss L. C. while she was in town.

Τέσσαρες αἱ Χάριτες, Παφίαι δύο, καὶ δέκα Μούσαι.
 Δερκυλὶς ἐν πάσαις Μούσα, Χάρις, Παφίη.

That's ancient Greek, yet applies to you,
 Louisa fair, I tell you true,
 You musn't think it my caprice :
 Were there not prophets in ancient Greece ?

In the wondrous days when the good ship Argo
 Went afloat with its hero-cargo,
 Muses and Greece didn't increase :
 A limit there was to the power of Greece.

If you've got a Greek scholar in Eaton Square,
 He'll say that epigram's true, I'll swear.
 But I guess that square is a square unique
 If it grows much poetry, English or Greek.

MORTIMER AND FRANCES.

The next I quote from the *Loiterer* of June 12th.

Now is the very time for loitering. Not with pen or paper though, but under shady trees which hang over river margins or cool long slopes of virgin turf. However, my pen, and not I, must loiter to-day, and it is possible that any one who saw me at work under full-leaved limes, with a red chestnut, burning lamp-like flowers close by, and with a thousand birds talking and twittering (it is too hot for them to sing) would probably say I have no need to grumble.

The next is to Mr. Townshend Mayer.

He took a pair of Mortimer Collins's pigeons when he left Knowl Hill, and had written to say that he was feeding them with all sorts of food.

June 19, 1875.

DEAR RALPH,—If you feed them pigeons in that atrocious heterogeneous way they'll die of dyspepsia. Seriously, they want simple food to flourish (like me). Hard peas, pure water, green grass, an occasional pinch of salt. Hemp and bread are sometimes useful when there are young ones to be fed.

Bringing in another pair is a dangerous experiment, especially of a different breed. My young birds sometimes get killed by old ones of the same breed. It would be better to leave them to their own devices.

The rabbit has been exchanged for a duck which quacks audibly. I shall have an Irish lady in the house when next you come, for our friend Grantley Berkeley is sending me a beautiful Gordon setter bitch to comfort Big Dog in his troubles. The old muff has run a thorn into his foot now, and it has to be poulticed, and he wants to eat it. I am writing on the lawn in my shirt sleeves at nearly 5 p.m., so you'll guess the weather's improved. Our last parson, dear old Fairbairn, now of Waltham St. Lawrence, called and joined me with a bottle of claret this afternoon; he brought his eldest boy with him, eight years old, who was wild about all our creatures.

The Missus chaffs him about his having so many children, which is a D X Y Z shame, as he has only eight.

Couldn't send Olla, for poor Growl was dying, and we've no heart for anything. Of course 'tis too late now.

Just got proof of first three chapters of *From Midnight to Midnight*. I'd forgotten it. It reads like forked lightning. The first chapter is "A Tiger at Midnight," the second "The World of Spirits."

Nearly forgot to tell you *Echo Bridge* is in Fairbairn's parish, the Missus gave him a copy of it, and he is going to read it in Church to-morrow during the offertory.

May I send a kiss to Gertrude?

MORTIMER AND FRANCES.

The next lines were written to Miss L. C. probably in June.

Loving friend, our Lady Loo,
 Nothing we've to say to you;
 Not a word, except that we
 Want your merry face to see;
 And to-morrow you can come,
 For we mean to be at home.
 Having given up the coach,
 Lo, we wait for your approach.

Will you come, or must we wait?
 Are you tired of ——'s estate?
 Won't you trip this way to seek—
 Fair philosophy and Greek?
 Often do your joyous eyes
 Bring a beautiful surprise,
 When beneath the limes you trip
 With a pert, provoking lip,
 And a smile that seems to say,
 "Sunshine comes with me to-day."

MORTIMER AND FRANCES.

The next is from the *Loiterer* of June 19th.

The village referred to is Knowl Hill.

The name on the clock very much irritated Mortimer Collins.

In a village where I have been known to sojourn, there has recently been placed a clock in the church spire. It is the gift of the heir of a noble old gentleman, who calmly trod the paths of life for ninety years, and is dedicated to his memory. Yet, on the face of that clock, in huge letters, stands the not unusual name

SMITH,

that being the patronymic of the clockmaker. Why does this legend glare upon us through the trees? Is it an advertisement purely? Does Smith expect any one who drives by and admires that dial to order a church-clock by return of post? The architect's name is not on the church. Why should the clockmaker's name obtrude itself in that aggressive fashion? "I pause for a reply."

The next I quote is from the same article.

Mortimer Collins used to gather some flowers every evening for the Secretary to wear in her hair. The Secretary, when with pressure of work she had reduced the time for preparing for dinner to a very few minutes, sometimes thought it rather troublesome to have to arrange

the flowers artistically; but she remembered how much pleasure it would give.

Fair reader, do you wear fresh flowers in your hair every evening at dinner? I hope so. It is a charming custom. They are lovely to look at, delicious to smell. Ladies are (mercifully) made as a rule shorter than the less worthy sex; and when you take a pretty girl in to dinner the moss-roses and honeysuckle in her hair heighten her fascination. The scent blends with that of the pine-apple at dessert, and of the fragrant mocha in the withdrawing-room in an exquisitely magical way.

A whiff of eglare from ladies' tresses
 A most magnetic mystery possesses:
 Twined in soft hair, the happy floweret tries
 To imitate their beauty, fails, and dies.

I have modernized the spelling of this tetrastich, which was written by a maternal ancestor of mine who fought for Charles I.

The tetrastich is of course his own.

The following I quote from "Adversaria" of June 26th.

Nine months have passed since I recorded the death of my faithful little Skye terrier, Fido, and now his

old companion Growl lies beside him beneath the limes. He was born at Wandsworth in September, 1862, so he has had a fairly long life for a little dog. I was present at his birth and christened him Growl, because ² his first act was to growl at his mother for bringing him into the world without his leave. Poor old boy, he has growled through life, always most at those he loved best, as is the way with some human cynics, and when he let me touch him without growling I knew he was in a bad way. A lion was a coward to the little fellow; he would have attacked one without hesitation. I have known him spring from a boat on the Thames to do battle with an angry male swan in the breeding time, when a black retriever in the boat cowered with terror. He has walked with me through many counties of England, sometimes doing forty miles a day with ease; and once, when walking through Buckinghamshire, we met Mr. and Mrs. Disraeli and just such another little dog in the Hughenden Lane, and, although neither he nor I had been introduced, he commenced a conversation at once. That night we stayed at the "George" at Aylesbury, where I amazed the waiter by eating seven consecutive mutton chops, Growl devouring the bones. Ay, we have had joyous times together, poor little dog; and it is satisfactory to know that, while you shared my gaiety, you had no share in those multitudinous troubles to which man is born.

There is great delight in pilgrimages through Eng-

land, as Chaucer showed in the verse of England's daybreak. Two young ladies, friends of mine, are coming seventy miles to see me, in a few days, in a lady's dog-cart drawn by their famous pony Moonface. They will pass from within sight of Warwick Castle to a distant view of Windsor's stately Towers in three days. Do they dread adventures? No, they hope for them; but giants have nearly all perished out of the earth, and those left behind are weak in the knees; and the knight-errant is gone upon the Stock Exchange; and the troubadour writes for *Punch*; and even the courteous highwayman, like Claude du Val, who lets a lady go unplundered when she had danced a minuet with him, is a pale phantom of the past. Ghosts fled from the wayside inns like rats from a sinking ship, when the mail-coaches stopped; so I fear my *sorores audaces* will arrive here quite safely without having even been frightened. Still there is no knowing. Let us hope that the poetry of life is not wholly extinct, and that they may meet with some delightfully dangerous adventure at the picturesque inn known as "Hopcroft's Holt!"

The next letter was evidently written early in June, but I place it here because it is explained by the last paragraph in the last quotation. It is to Miss M. A. S., who is some-

times called "Margaret" and sometimes "Annie," in Mortimer Collins's letters.

Knowl Hill.

DEAR MARGARET,—Hurrah for the immortal bantam! Hurrah for your "shooling," though I'm d——d if I can find the word in any dictionary. However, it means you and Clara and Moonface are coming this way, and I need not say we shall be delighted to see you. I have had in my time much experience of young ladies, and I have never known any so free from humbug as you are. You seem to have hit on exactly the right road. I don't know Addesbury, but it is three and a half miles from Banbury, and had a population, at the last census, of 2192. It may have an inn, it may have an adventure: I should prefer riding cock-horse to Banbury Cross myself, and trying the Red Lion or the White Lion. But you two children are as wild as Rosalind in the Forest of Arden. Sandford is three and a quarter miles this side Oxford, and I must have walked through it more than once without seeing it. If you don't care to stay at Oxford, better go on to Dorchester, five miles farther, and about twenty miles from us. Its church was once a cathedral, and the bishopric (largest in England) stretched from Thames to Humber. I think I remember drinking some tolerable ale there, but whether there are beds there fit for two young adventuresses I don't know. The

Missus will find all the bachelors she can to meet you.
Ella comes on the 12th.

Yours ever,

MORTIMER AND FRANCES.

On the 29th of June, Mortimer Collins wrote to the ladies at an inn called “Hopcroft’s Holt,” where they expected to stay a night on their way to Knowl Hill. But they only baited their pony there and the landlord could not understand to whom the letter belonged. Mortimer Collins wrote to request that it might be sent on to the ladies at Knowl Hill, and it was returned opened. It is in rhyme, but was written in prose, and must have rather astonished the landlord. Some lines are omitted which refer to people in the neighbourhood of Knowl Hill.

Knowl Hill,

June 29, 1875.

DEAR MARGARET AND CLARA,—I write a line to say you’ll be each an *avis rara* upon the Queen’s Highway. For pretty girls are rare as pearls, and a precious deal more pleasant; and you’ll open the eyes to a

monstrous size of many a staring peasant. Your very best plan with a highwayman, if you can't at once dismiss him, if he's young and gay and smells like May, would be, I should say, to kiss him.

Road is very much safer than rail, if we believe Miss Dickenson's tale.

* * * * *

Now, girls, you musn't let Moonface bolt before you arrive at Hopcroft's Holt—and tell the landlord I'll punch his head if he doesn't give you a jolly spread.

MORTIMER COLLINS.

The following lines are to Miss L. C., who, when Mortimer Collins said she had no faults, replied that she had one, which was Envy.

Louisa has a single fault,
 (No girl without one's worth her salt)
 Envy its name, 'tis strange to me,
 No trace of it in her I see,
 Assuage my curiosity:
 Whom do you envy, Miss, and why?

You envy our two pilgrims, p'raps,
 Who for a "shooling" pack their traps;
 Defy the rain that makes us cheerless,
 Of highwaymen are wholly fearless.
 And quite regret the ancient gay days
 When some adventures came to ladies.

But, when you say you're envious,
 It cannot be you envy us—
 Our power of meeting toils and troubles,
 Of blowing fair poetic bubbles,
 Of gaining joy in dreariest times
 From song of blackbird in the limes.

If envy is the thing to do,
 We really ought to envy you—
 Your hearty friendliness and kindness,
 To trivial faults your loving blindness,
 Your mercy, wit, and graceful ease—
 O yes, we envy you, Louise.

*This is better
 than I can do,
 so long as I
 have
 sense*

MORTIMER AND FRANCES.

The next is from "Adversaria" of July 10th.

Burnham Beeches is a lovely bit of forest ground: few such spots are there in England. I was there this week in company of very pleasant ladyhood: a naval officer had promised to join us, but missed his train, and missed also an uncommonly good lobster. By that lobster there hangs a tale. Most picnics have some kind of difficulty. I have known the hamper of wine forgotten. I have also known a picnic without a corkscrew. But that has never happened since with me. I never go anywhere without a penknife and a corkscrew. But our lobster! It came down from London to the Bear Hotel at Maidenhead, with other matters,

such as pineapples and strawberries, which help to make a picnic pleasant; but when we opened the basket, we found that lobster was not boiled! However, Mr. Dawson, as amiable a host as ever lived, sent it into the kitchen, and we started twenty minutes later than we had intended, *astacus* hot from his pot. ✓

Mortimer Collins could always thoroughly appreciate ability in another man. In July, 1875, he had occasion to review a collection of Shirley Brooks's verses from *Punch*. I quote some part of the review, not only to show the appreciation, but because I am sure there are many who will agree with me in saying that almost the same words might have been written of Mortimer Collins himself only a year later.

Thousands of readers who never saw his (Shirley Brooks's) vigorous, intelligent face, or felt the grasp of his friendly hand, must yet have had a feeling of friendliness for the man who met them week after week in *Punch* with easy, humorous comment on the affairs of the day. It is the misfortune of those who expend their main energy on periodic literature that their real genius is not always recognized. Theodore Hook may be taken as a typical instance of this, and after an

evening with Theodore Hook, Coleridge said that he was as great a genius as Dante. But when genius expends itself on ephemeral themes it cannot make the same mark on the world as when it attacks and develops a subject whose interest is permanent. Still, the profit to the public is immense. A comic periodical like *Punch*—never indignantly satiric save on stern occasions, always throwing a halo of humour and romance around political and social topics—does much towards lightening the atmosphere, towards taking the sting from political strife, towards reconciling class with class. Such journals are a unique product of the English race: French fun is seldom pure: German fun always heavy

* * * * *

No printer ever waited for Shirley Brooks's "copy:" his pen could scarce keep pace with the rapid rush of his ideas. That swift brain movement was quite unforced: his friends know that he seldom wrote a letter without an epigram, and his conversation over the claret and olives was as effervescent and joyous as the foam of Dionysus. At such times he played with ideas, blew iridescent bubbles of thought, showed "the apprehensive forgetive faculty" in its perfection.

The next was written to Mr. Townshend Mayer on 12th July.

"Olla podrida" was a term used by Mr.

Townshend Mayer for an article on general subjects at the end of the *St. James's*.

MY DEAR RALPH,—How are the pigeons? “Olla” is something eatable, isn't it? Here's an idea for dwellers in the country. Keep pigeons: they fly over your trees in the sunlight, and coo upon your roofs, and make the scene lively. Few things are prettier, as Londoners know, than a flight of pigeons in sunny air. Then they are good to eat. With green grass, pure water and peas for food, you can get young ones even at Christmas. I always do. Roast pigeon is good with bacon around him: stewed pigeon is good: the bird enlivens a rump-steak pie. His liver is excellent on anchovy toast. That distinguished epicure, Colonel Money, advises you to eat with him purple Hamburg grapes, and drink claret cup. That was in July: in December other accompaniment would be requisite: and one beauty of the pigeon is that, like the lobster, he is all the year round in season.

As an antidote to this eulogy of the “*Albulus Columbus*” (as Catullus called Cæsar), I send you a version of the “*Persicos odi*,” not so good as Shirley Brooks's or Thackeray's, but on a new principle:—

Persicos odi, puer, apparatus;

Bring me a chop and a couple of potatoes:

When we are dining care should not await us,

Spoiling our glory.

Simplici myrto nihil ad labores ;
 All ostentation a confounded bore is . . .
 After, a glass of port that sound at core is
 Will suit a Tory.

By the way, O editor Ralph, give your dogmatic opinion about anonymous letters. I receive shoals of them, always of course abusive and ungrammatical, since a man who cannot master the grammar of conduct will scarce succeed with the grammar of language. My crime is that on many subjects I hold strong opinions which are not those of the wise and progressive majority. Well knowing the weighty saying, “Nulla vestigia retrorsum,” I yet think we have made a good many mistakes lately which we shall not retrieve. But did you ever drive four-in-hand? Picture Disraeli on the box, with Progress for near leader, Disestablishment for off leader, Atheism and Red Republic wheelers, but ready to be leaders in a few stages. Give them their heads! Progress bolts; Disestablishment gibbs at the Church spire: nice team for a gentleman coachman! The best thing to tame the beggars would be to have to go at a hill full gallop: and I sometimes think, to drop allegory, that a big war is wanted to bring certain classes of Englishmen to their senses.

There, you villain. If in this nonsense there's any material for Olla, use it.

Yours *à la,*

MORTIMER C.

The incident mentioned in the next quotation I make is worth recording as helping to show Mortimer's open and generous nature.

We had been spending the day at Medmenham, a merry party, consisting of Mortimer Collins, his daughter, Dr. Steele, the dogs, and the Secretary, in the summer of 1870. When it was time to go home the ferryman could nowhere be found to take us across the river. We were afraid we should be late for dinner, as we had loitered longer than we should have done. A boating man, lounging near us, seeing our anxiety, offered to take us across in his own boat. When he had rowed us over and was taking our thanks, Mortimer Collins whispered to the Secretary, "Wouldn't he like to come home with us? he must be dull at the inn, he is evidently a downright good fellow."

The Secretary at once took the hint, and, going up to the stranger, said, "We are Mortimer Collins, his wife and daughter, and Dr. Steele. Will you come home and dine with us, we have three or four miles to walk to our house?"

The stranger said, " I am C—— B——, I shall be delighted to come, but I am in my flannels."

✓ Of course the flannels were not an obstacle, and Mr. C. B. tramped home with us. Mortimer Collins's mother was a little astonished at the gentleman in flannels at the dinner-table, but she was used to her son's odd ways.

Two, *post meridiem*.—I have just lunched and read my *Times*, which has nothing in it worth reading. A dull day, but a deliciously warm one—the first of summer. How divine the days of clear sunshine after a sky of brass and a perpetual drip, drip, drip! No words can describe the beauty visible from the bay windows in which I sit writing. On the right, heavy lime foliage, and a vase where white tumbler pigeons are drinking; on the left, holly and laurel, medlar and scarlet oak. 'Pon honour, as they say in the old comedies, 'tis a shame to have to loiter on paper on such a day as this! If my editor were here upon the lawn, he would say, "Throw the *Loiterer* over, old fellow, and we'll go to the Thames at Medmenham, 'Fay ce que voudras.'" That was the motto of the famous abbey of Bohemians (Medmenham Abbey) founded by Sir Francis Dashwood, Chancellor of the Exchequer in days when financial ministers were

slightly less decorous than Sir Stafford Northcote, and did not mind associating with squinting Jack Wilkes and Churchill, the poet—or poetaster. Lord, how many a day I've had at Medmenham Abbey! A great place for Bohemians. I have made acquaintances there many a time, and never seen them since: good fellows enough, but the men who travel up and down the imperial stream in steam launches, eight oars, randans, are irregular in their movements. I remember, when my *mater* was staying with me a few years ago, bringing home from Medmenham a good sort of fellow in boating flannel, who turned out amusing, though not very literate. The old lady, rather a precisian, scarcely tolerated a man in flannel at the dinner-table, but he made himself agreeable, and she forgave him.

I next quote from "Adversaria" of July 17th.

At this moment starlings and blackbirds and thrushes are tugging away at the worms on my lawn with unusual success. Whether the worms like it or not, the result is feathered music, delighting human ears. Worms are designed to be eaten by birds, and will suffer that treatment through all time, unless Mr. Darwin can induce them to develope into something else. Why should he not? If an ascidian becomes an ape, and an ape a man, there ought to be no difficulty about a worm's becoming a boa-constrictor, and defy-

ing the birds. There is a female blackbird now within my ken feeding four little ones (her second brood of four this year) with indefatigable assiduity.

The next was written to Miss L. C., probably in July.

Tuesday—no, Wednesday.

It is half-past xii.

DEAR LOUISA,—We have both felt very much this last annoyance that you have had. The gold of friendship is destined to be tested, and in unexpected ways. But it stands the test.

Sophocles says (I know you like Greek), *Οὐδέν ποθ' ἔρπει ψεύδος εἰς γῆρας χρόνον*. I'll take pity on you this time, and tell you what the sweet singer of Colonos meant, "No lie lives to see old age."

Yes, thus he said, the Attic sage,

"No lie can live to see old age."

Louisa, who is off to where

Less slander's floating in the air,

Will quite forget, by winding Wye,

That folk can live who love to lie,

And when she next pops in her head

Where nought but truth to her is said,

Let's hope the lies will all be dead.

We'll have a laugh beneath the trees,

And drink a health to Sophocles.

We were sorry not to have asked you whether we could meet you anywhere, and walk to Waltham tomorrow. We could study the tombs while you are at the F.'s, and loiter back again. Name time and place, unless, indeed, you like to come this way. My Mercury will await answer.

MORTIMER AND FRANCES.

The next I quote is from "Adversaria" of July 17th.

Mortimer Collins often received abusive anonymous letters concerning what he had said in the papers. No man could hit harder in satirical verse than he, and it is curious that the writers of the anonymous letters always spoke of his "weak verse" or "doggrel." If it was weak, why did it trouble them so much?

Do my readers suffer from the plague of impertinent letter-writing? The advertising tradesfolk are bad enough, with their sherry that will cure the gout (I haven't the gout, and touch no sherry) and their quack medicines that will cure everything, and their sales of invaluable articles at a loss, and a thousand other devices to catch flats. *Obiter dictum*: never buy of a tradesman who is always advertising; you will have to help to pay him for his advertisements. Then there are the charity-seekers, who want to send flannel shirts

to Central Africa, or to get an orphan (poor little wretch! let's hope they'll fail) into an asylum, or to build a church in some deserted district. I think if English Churchmen hold their own, and forget their divisions, wherever a church is needed it will build itself. But your worst fiend is the anonymous letter-writer. Holding decided opinions, and having (who coined the phrase?) the courage of my opinions, I have in my time printed things which other people don't like. Well, I see in the papers a great many things I don't like, but I write no letters to their authors. Thought is free. Every man has a right to utter his mind. I shall certainly utter mine so long as I have power to do it adequately.

The next letter was written on July 20, and the references to *Punch* are concerning two contributions by Mortimer Collins.

MY DEAR CAMPKIN,—Silence is not golden on your part. Why don't you write? Above all, why don't you come and see us?

If you glance at *Punch* to-morrow, tell me what you think of the wicked attack on your friend Whalley, on p. 23, and of "Crede Byron," on p. 34.

Thine,

MORTIMER.

The next was written on the 26th of July.
The verses appeared in *Punch* of July 10th.

MY DEAR CAMPKIN,—Thanks for your pleasant letter :
your letters are always pleasant. . . . We are twelve
miles from Burnham Beeches, my friend, and I some-
times walk there and back, and the missus drives and
brings a lobster and wine. Will you meet us there ?
I wrote concerning the grand old trees in *Punch*, and
was there on the day my rhymes appeared.

Thine,

MORTIMER COLLINS.

The next was written to Miss L. C., probably
in July. It is dated *S. Punch*, but whether
that means the anniversary of *Punch*, or simply
what Mortimer Collins called his "*Punch day*"
in the week, I cannot tell.

S. Punch.

LADY LOUISA,—Nothing to say,
Except that the wind is blowing this way :
'Tis the merry South : on the lawn we sit,
And he steals my pages of wisdom and wit ;
And he wakes the limes to a musical roar,
Just like the rush of the sea on the shore.

I'm in love with the South : the North wind freezes,
And the rain comes up with the Western breezes,

And the angry East has a temper that rankles,
 But the gay South flutters the ladies' ankles,
 And in joyous whisper seems to say,
 "Come out, we shall have Love's weather to-day.

Lady Louisa, glad am I,
 You are far away by sonorous Wye.
 (Y is it called so? Do you know?
 'Cause you never know which side you go.
 If you look at a map, and its course you try,
 Wye looks very much like Y.)

And I hope you'll come to the lawn and limes,
 Wholly forgetful of troublesome times,
 Gladden'd much by the tranquil rest,
 Full of your natural, eager zest,
 Our friend who is always loving and true,
 Our one Louisa—there couldn't be two.

MORTIMER AND FRANCES.

The next is from "Adversaria" of August 7th.

White rats seem the fashion: I don't mean political white rats. I hear of them from all quarters. I bought a couple a day or two ago, and hope to study their peculiarities. Few animals that I have tried are so pretty in their habits, or so charmingly tame. They lie on the palm of a lady's hand and play tricks with

her finger-nails. Their frolics in a cage (the larger the better) are delightful. It is my first introduction to these charming quadrumanous creatures, and I am marvellously pleased with them. Their instinctive tameness and fearlessness are wonderful. When my Pyrenean wolf-hound and a Gordon setter walked up to investigate their cage, they put their pink noses through the wires, and investigated their invaders with no slightest sign of alarm.

CHAPTER IV.

SEPTEMBER TO DECEMBER, 1875.

MORTIMER COLLINS's Pyrenean wolf-hound was so dear a friend to him that I feel justified in quoting verses written to him.

The following were written in September, 1875, and were printed in *Punch* of that month:—

CAUSIDICUS AD CANEM.

My old dog stands by the Temple stairs
Watching the water's turbid flow,
And he thinks, as the autumn sunlight glares,
This is a river he ought to know.

He gives a strange, suspicious sniff,
As he sees the dark stream eddy along,
And dreams of a lazy loitering skiff,
Of a lover's laugh, of a lady's song.

First drops of a deluge, heavy and warm,
 Under Marlow Bridge had driven us three,
 And we rock'd in our boat in the thunder storm,
 If either grew tired, dear dog, 'twas he.

Ah! the days are here for the straining oars—
 The life and the love our toil to crown!
 You shall splash, old boy, from the soft green shores
 Of a river unsoil'd by London town.

The next I quote is from "Adversaria" of September 4th, when Mortimer Collins was writing on autumn holidays.

In September if a man has got a home, he should stay in it. The Venusian's happy hexameters ring in my ears:—

*Hæ latebræ dulces, etiam, si credis, amœnæ,
 Incolumem tibi me præstant Septembribus horis.*

It seems to me the very time of all the year for home delight. How long the shadows in the brisk fresh morning, when you hear the starling talk wisely on the roof, and see blackbird and thrush searching for the early worm! How sweet the myriad honeysuckles in the green lanes, where the children already search for blackberries! How pleasant the dinner at seven, with lights on the table, yet windows wide open to the lawn! Assuredly I, with Horace, like my own *latebræ*

... ..

dulces in September, and shall not easily be tempted away from them.

The next is from the *Loiterer* of September 18th.

Mortimer Collins had been to Wargrave with his Secretary, to see Mr. Edward Draper.

Lovers of the Thames who know Wargrave doubtless remember the sign which was painted by two A.R.A.'s.

I was over at Wargrave a few days ago in search of a friend who loves the Thames; I missed him, so I looked in at Wyatt's, and enjoyed a glass of something refrigerant. The new sign of the "George and Dragon," painted by two A.R.A.'s who stop at Wargrave is capital. St. George slaying the Dragon is, as it ought to be, heroic; but the other side, St. George's draconic victim lying extinct, and St. George's horse looking gravely on, while St. George himself thirstily quaffs a tankard of bitter ale, is perfectly delightful. It makes one thirsty, which is, of course, exactly what an inn sign ought to do.

The next is a letter to Miss L. C.

From the tone of it, it seems that some of

the neighbours had objected to Mortimer Collins leaning on his gate on Sunday to watch them pass.

S. Matthew.

DEAR LOUISA,—It was cruelly naughty of you not to look in to-day, considering how long a time has passed since we saw you. No: that is not why I lean over my gate on Sundays. There is no study more interesting than to mark the countenances of the various villagers as they go *to* church, and again as they come *from* church: but this is a subject too wide to be treated on paper. At the same time Frances wishes me to say that she *never* (emphatically NEVER) “views the road on a Sunday.” She prefers her quiet solitude amid the trees.

If you please, Miss Louisa, we have not got a “drawing-room.” We have a book-room, whence there are many ladders of light to that highest sphere in which all mysteries will find solution. And you are coming in “velvet and Samite,” are you? Velvet . . . velouette . . . means delicacy and softness. Samite is Greek, pure Greek . . . anything woven with six threads. What can those six threads mean? The six letters of your musical name? or the six days of the week, since we’re not to be spoken to o’ Sundays?

So Jack has a new collar and chain, and you won't afford yourself one, being "economicable," as a careless friend of Frances's called herself to-day in a letter. But what *do* you want of a new collar and chain? I like the old chain, that binds you to Poet's cottage, and that somebody has broken his teeth in trying to bite through. We don't want to see you in anything new. We want the old Louisa.

When is your birthday? You know why I want to know. What day of the week were you born? You don't know why I want to know that.

MORTIMER AND FRANCES.

The next is to Miss L. C., and appears to have been written when the lovers of gossip in the neighbourhood were busier than usual.

October 1, 1875.

DEAR LOUISA,—You will not, I am sure, think me unkind; but it is absolutely impossible for me to yield an iota to what — calls "the public opinion of the neighbourhood." I should be doubly a coward in doing so; I should betray my own principles and should be treacherous to Frances, who is attacked equally with myself. This would be the case whatever the weight of opinion against me; but in the present instance I feel still more strongly. If, therefore, you are

so persecuted that you feel it requisite to deny us the pleasure of your society, we must submit; but on my own part I can make no concession.

Mr. C—— naturally thinks the whole thing a trifle, and inclines to that compromise which is popular among men of the world.

Much was said when —— called on Saturday that night, perhaps, interest you; but nothing of real value came from him.

It would, you must see, dear Louisa, be impossible for me to give way a hair's breadth in this matter. I do not consider only my position in this village, among people the majority of whom I regard with pity or contempt; I think also of my position in the far wider region of English literature, wherein my name is pretty well known. I should blush to read what I have written on the duty of man to his Maker and his neighbour, if I made any concession to the cowardly insinuations of a scandal-monger.

Ever yours,

MORTIMER AND FRANCES.

The next, from the *Loiterer* of 2nd October, I quote not only because it shows Mortimer Collins's opinion on work, and that he regarded work much more seriously than he appeared to do, but for another reason.

It has been said and even printed that Mortimer Collins was exceedingly fond of society and good living. Any one reading the following would suppose that he was in the habit of dining at a club, and dining well. And there are many more allusions in his articles to the opinions of some friend he met at the club. Now the friend was always his Secretary, *out of whose company he never dined but once for eight years*. The Secretary often found herself put in print as "Syllogisticus," or a friend at the club.

Syllogisticus has just been pitching into me for my remarks on Mr. Newdegate's speech last week. We had been dining quietly at the Chandos Club—the only club in London where you meet men who know a thing or two. . . . Well, Syllogisticus, having glanced through last week's *Loiterer* somewhat contemptuously, drinks a glass of Lafitte, and opens upon me thus:—

"No happiness but in labour! That's Mr. Newdegate's thesis, and not his alone, but that of men like Lord Derby, who prefers a Blue Book to his father's 'Iliad.' I say that the most perfect happiness is not work, but play; and I also say that men like Mr. Newdegate don't know the meaning of work. They

are doing what they like ; that I call play, not work. No man knows what work means unless he lives by it. If I dropped my quill, sir, I should get no dinner. The gentlemen who lecture on labour, and whose dinner is safe, cannot understand that. They can stop when they are tired. I have had to work till my brain would move no longer, and I sank on my bed insensible, with a terrible illness before me ; that's work, if you will. *Laborare est orare*, said the old monks ; *Laborare est vita frui*, say the modern lecturers. Both true, within limits. My labour is prayer now, because I am teaching men and women what they would not have learnt without my aid. My labour is life-enjoyment now because I am not working in absolute dread of starvation, which has been my lot ; but I repeat that the man born to affluence, whatever he achieves by voluntary industry, never works at all. He does good, doubtless ; he can be no more said to work than a polo-player, or Grace on the cricket-field, or Dr. Pusey when he sits down to chess with a competent opponent. It is only play. The test of *work* is—Do you live by it ? Unless you do, I defy you to understand the real feelings of a working-man. I hate work ; I specially hate the only kind of work that I find pays. But one must live, you know. . . . Waiter, another bottle of that Lafitte !”

The next paragraph refers to Mr. Oswald

Crawfurd, the Consul for Oporto, who had in the autumn of 1875 paid a visit to Poet's Cottage.

The *World* tells us that John Latouche, the traveller in Portugal, is John Dangerfield, who commenced a novelette in that periodical last week. He is also, as Archibald Banks, one of the pleasantest country essayists of these days; and he is, moreover, in his own name, Oswald Crawfurd, a gentleman who has commenced his literary career with an easy brilliancy which I should envy, if to envy were possible. But it is not, and I can enjoy the work of an able man without hating him for being abler than I am—can delight in the beauty and wit of a lovely woman without wanting to run away with her.

The next is to Mr. Townshend Mayer. Lord Lyttelton (whose handwriting was very illegible, wrote to Mortimer concerning the article in the *St. James's Magazine* called "The Rugby Rebellion."

When the Bishop of Exeter made his charges against Dr. Hayman he said,—

It would be natural on leaving I should recommend

my successor to the parents who consult me confidentially, but as an honest man I am unable to do so.

Mortimer Collins in writing on this had quoted this sentence in this way,

. . . "but as an honest man (*sic*)"

Lord Lyttelton wrote to know what he meant by this. Mortimer said he thought it strange that a Bishop should find it necessary to use such an expression, as it was understood that a Bishop must be an honest man.

A rather long correspondence was kept up with Lord Lyttelton on the subject, in fact till within a very short period of his lordship's death, but no copy of Mortimer Collins's letters was made.

October, 1875.

DEAR RALPH,—I have received a long letter from Lord Lyttelton, which I enclose to you, and hope you may be able to read it. I haven't yet succeeded; but I wrote a brief note to say that if I found his criticism required any change in my statements it should (with your editorial permission) be made. I also referred to his question ("What does *sic* mean?" p. 520) and

told him that no gentleman and *à fortiori* no Bishop should parade his honesty to the public. You see his rather weak reply. The question is whether in Olla it would be well to notice his letter.

Gertrude's new story begins as prettily as a story could, and is worthy of her light hand. You shall have more pigeons, my friend: we (the Missus that is) have eaten only four this week. We have had Oswald Crawford down here, and found him charming.

à e l

MORTIMER COLLINS.

The next is to Mr. Townshend Mayer.

October, 1875.

DEAR RALPH,—The Felstead School Scandal might be worthy of a paragraph in Olla, as showing how the Rugby affair has demoralized Trustees. *Times* of September 22nd contained a long letter thereon, signed Hardcastle: and to-day there is one from Grignon, the expelled Head-master. It is a vile case. Of course it is too late to notice this month, but it should be noticed.

Our love to you and Gertrude. How are you? The Missus is getting well, but I am swearing at a sore throat, and trying to cure it with tarragon—not the vinegar.

Ever yours,

MORTIMER COLLINS.

The next is a pretty little bit from "Adversaria," where some of the poet's favourite trees, which he set himself, are mentioned. And then he lovingly addresses his readers for whom he had written so long, and for whom he was not to write much longer. There were many people who knew him only as *Cæcilius*, the writer of "Adversaria," and wrote pleasant letters to him.

"The dulness of the present autumn is really portentous. As I write I look out on a lime-shaded lawn, washed by the ever-descending deluge. It is pretty, but very chilly. The limes are tinged with yellow; a copper-beech burns opposite with colours indescribable; blackbirds, and song-thrushes, and missel-thrushes are making fine meals upon worms, and talking to each other musically. But the water is running down the paths, and I fear all the flavour will be washed out of my medlars. This is distinctly weather in which one must make one's own sunshine. Happy the man who has a loving wife and faithful friends—the best materials for that manufacture.

"And, dear reader, who has faithfully accompanied me through long columns of "Adversaria" for many a long year, dost thou not find that this pluvius weather produces much newspaper stupidity? The duller the weather the duller the writer."

The friends referred to in the next paragraph were Mr. Campkin (the Antiquary), the Librarian of the Reform Club, and Mr. Littleton Hay (the Wanderer).

“Two friends, whom I will call the Antiquary and the Wanderer, came to see me on Saturday last, and greatly interfered with my literary work. I begin with an apology to that great potentate the Editor for being behind my time. . . . There were days when I was a Londoner as well as a Loiterer. I know my London now as well as any man living, but I prefer the country. What I like is to get my London friends to visit me, and bring the airy memories of the town, the latest wit and wisdom of the clubs. It is very charming, over a wood-fire, with a good cigar, to listen to the newest news and wittiest wit.

The Antiquary and the Wanderer, who had not met before, and whose ages differed by a year or two, got on together excellent well. As to the Antiquary, he and I never met without a friendly fight on politics.

. . . . My friend the Wanderer has been tramping through Hampshire and Wiltshire. I like a tramp of that kind, but am too busy to attempt it, and my numerous admirers have not yet offered me a two-horse omnibus to give me an autumnal tour. I have walked through most of England's counties, and written descriptions of many of my walks. . . . The

Wanderer was very savage about Stonehenge. He went there to enjoy a look at the grand old mysterious monument, and behold Joseph Arch was there holding a mutinous meeting. So a wayfarer who desired to study in quiet a marvellous monument of the past, was foiled by a "fool with a circumbendibus," as Coleridge has it, who was talking frightful nonsense to a lot of working men. If this Arch is to emit platitudes, surely he might choose some place fitter than the noblest and most mysterious of those ancient monuments which Parliament finds it so difficult to protect."

The next I quote from "Adversaria" of 30th October. The giver of the rare volume was Mr. Campkin.

"A dear friend of mine, who knows I love old books if they are worth anything, has just given me a copy of Martial published at Zurich in 1544, and bound in oak with clasps. It is in a delightful italic type. There's a treasure for you, O bibliophilist! The oak binding is a perfect piece of art, tooled with the care of those ancient days. . . . Martial went over the same ground pretty often; but he was the mirror of Imperial Rome, and his record of that age is most valuable to all who study history. Few men know Martial thoroughly, he is so various. He was in my judgment a good fellow and a great satirist. To satirize the Rome of Domitian

he was compelled of course to write what is unfit for boys and girls to read.

I transcribe the Horatian lines which the giver of that unique Martial put on the fly-leaves. They flatter me, but they are too good to omit.

Cæcilius! take this tome as tribute true,
 'Tis rendering unto Cæsar Cæsar's due;
 For, if the best books should be his who best
 Can use them, this should surely bear your crest,
 To you its mighty strains—to me all mute—
 Are musical as is Apollo's lute!
 Since Zurich's press sent this brave volume forth
 Three hundred years and thirty Mother Earth
 Hath added to her tale: while centuries
 Eighteen have lapsed since Martial oped his eyes
 And, with his scorpion thong, essay'd to lash
 The vices, follies of his age. No flash
 Of summer lightning his stern verse illumes,
 But with Olympian bolts he smites, consumes.
 Thus he whose lightest line's a thunder stroke
 Fit armour finds in panoply of oak.

And a grand old panoply of oak it is, and I ask you, gentle reader, could friendly verse be more charming, more enjoyable?

Mortimer Collins wrote the following answer to Mr. Campkin's verses:—

CAMPKIN! dear friend, your Martial is divine,
 And strong the music of your sounding line :
 Marcus Valerius Martialis might
 Thank you himself for judging him aright,
 E'en tho' within his fields of epigram
 You wander not. Yet very sure I am,
 If you had pass'd the heavy Latin gates,
 Too often open'd for mere addlepatas,
 You would have been at home, and felt the fire
 Of the great masters of the Roman lyre.
 You might have been more learned, I surmise,
 But not more friendly, Campkin, not more wise,
 Nor could you say to friend a pleasant thing
 In silver verse of more sonorous ring.
 Thanks for your Martial : 'tis of books a flower,
 And I shall waste on it full many an hour.
 Oak fitly binds such book, I hold it true ;
 For English heart of oak I come to you.

MOERTIMEE AND FRANCES COLLINS.

Mr. Littleton Hay sent a present of game in October, and also some writing-paper of Pirie's make. The following letter in verse was sent as thanks :—

DEAR LITTLETON HAY,—'Tis a very queer day,
 There's nought in the sky to inspire us,

And yet I must really have something to say
Concerning some matters that travel this way.

Perdices atque Papyrus.

Magistra, you know, is a lover of game—

Such food does not easily tire us ;

So I send you a trifle of rhyme in her name,

To thank you for courteously sending the same,

And also for Pirie's Papyrus.

And before the bright autumn has burnt itself dead,

Write a rhyme to the Clerk of the Weather,

And implore him to let us, while beech leaves are red,

Ere the voyaging daughters of Procne are fled,

Have a few hours of sunshine together.

The next is part of a letter to Miss L. C.,
written in November.

Mortimer's novel "Sweet and Twenty" was not reviewed in a famous paper because the Editor did not approve of the heroine climbing trees. Mortimer Collins used to ask all his lady friends if they had ever climbed trees, and was delighted when he heard they had. On this occasion he seems to have asked Lady E—— the question.

You have shot a golden shaft of sunshine through

our life. You sometimes write of what we have done for you: but by the law of humanity all benefit is reciprocal, and what you do for another that other returns to you. If you find this a dark saying, come when there is sunshine, and I'll explain it. We had a call from Lady E—— this afternoon, and she says she has much enjoyed life *up a tree*.

Yours, wherever you are, and

Whatever you do,

MORTIMER AND FRANCES.

The next is to Mr. Townshend Mayer.

November 21, 1875.

DEAR RALPH,—Ain't it fine opening a hamper from a friend? We had THREE! by Jove, yesterday evening, and didn't we ransack them with curiosity. One had come from our Doctor, who, you see, understands medicine; and the other had feminine frippery and ornaments, and delicate edibles from a fair friend of the Missus's. As to yours, it was Editorial Olla, and no mistake. How Louis was delighted with the eggs. There were such a lot of things that I can't remember them in detail.

I have read your story, and like it. If it's true, as the Missus says, that you wrote it before you left the nursery, it's a wonderful product of genius. Beats Mozart, who didn't manage an oratorio till he was five,

which must be considered elderly. I should like to know the facts. I can't quite guess how it got into a Church Magazine, but perhaps the editor cut out the pious parts to use in his own sermons. If so, doubtless the sermons and the story were improved.

Horne is wonderful. I don't think I ever read through *Orion*, and I have quite forgotten it. But *Marlowe* recalls the "Mighty line" of Marlowe himself. I am really thankful to you for sending me that—as also for the bound *St. James's*, of which your volume looks charming. Love from us both to "Gertie," and don't let her work too hard: but the Missus will write.

Hope our namesakes are well. Do they breed? That reminds me, our white rats had a litter of six about five weeks back, and a day or two ago another litter of ten! Here's a go. Rats enough for a county. *Have a few?*

Thine,

MORTIMER.

In the parcel from Mr. Townshend Mayer, alluded to in the last letter, a half-crown was sent to pay the carriage. The coin was returned to Mrs. Townshend Mayer with the following verses:—

You sent us, Gertie, half-a-crown,—
To keep it we're unwilling:

The carriage of your goods from town
 Cost [really] not a shilling.

“Returning coin!” sly Ralph will say,
 The notion is a droll one,
 “A *half-crown* too!” I hope some day
 That Fame may give a whole one.

MORTIMER AND FRANCES.

Miss M. A. and C. S., when they visited the Cottage, brought with them some eschalots which they had grown and pickled themselves. Mortimer Collins found them so good that he wished for more, and wrote the following nonsense to beg for them:—

Fair sisters for whom Moonface trots
 To covert sides and picnic spots,
 Can you not spare some more shalots?

Had I the pen of Dr. Watts,
 Who wrote of lovely songs such lots,
 How I'd immortalize shalots!

Close to the cosiest of cots
 They grow in pleasant garden plots,
 Margaret and Clara's rare shalots.

Better than pines or bergamots,
 When pickled well in green glass pots,
 Are the divine doll's-house shalots.

MORTIMER AND FRANCES.

In November a couple of stories, which together made three volumes, were published. "Blacksmith and Scholar" and "From Midnight to Midnight."

The first carried out one of Mortimer Collins's favourite theories, that it is possible for a gentleman to do manual work without being degraded.

I will quote a few lines where the author, in his usual way, talks to the reader.

In quoting Juvenal's remark,—

*Nil habet infelix paupertas durius in se,
 Quam quod ridiculos homines facit,*

he says,—

I do not know whether any scholiast has pointed out, what probably is obvious to most students, that Juvenal would not have said of *Vir*, the man at his acme, the hero, what he says of *homo*, a mere male animal *ex humo*. A true man of the highest class

cannot be rendered ridiculous by poverty. An ordinary man becomes ridiculous when his coat is out at elbow, or even when, after having drunk much champagne, untoward circumstances reduce him to bitter ale.

I quote this because it shows a point in Mortimer Collins's character. Poverty did not make him ridiculous.

In another place he talks to the reader about great rivers. He says,—

A great river is a Divine gift to men. Its power, its continuity, its tranquil movements are lessons to the wanderer by its margin. No wonder the Greeks deified their rivers. I shall be told that rivers must necessarily flow downward according to the law of gravitation. True, O scientist! but whose hand binds the spheres together, and guides the streams to the sea? Law is excellent; analyze it, calculate it, show that it varies by the square or cube, as may be; but remember that behind law lies power, and that the wonderful beauty and simplicity of nature's rules show them to be Divine. When man succeeds, he is devoutly imitative. The Eddystone Lighthouse had disaster after disaster, till the idea occurred to an imaginative builder to imitate the oak in its structure. I suspect the aëronautic art will not be perfected until the flight of birds is more carefully studied. And I firmly

believe that speed in steamships should be obtained by the method which makes the lobster the swiftest of the sea's inhabitants. When in a hurry he swims backwards, his tail, as he rises and falls, grasping the water. You may see prawns in an aquarium do the same if they are frightened. Now I take it that all these curious mechanic powers conferred on the lower creatures are lessons to men. Similarly I believe that no plant grows which has not special nutrition or medicinal power—that there is no animal without definite use. This planet is a perfectly contrived machine, with no screw loose anywhere, designed simply for the education of man. Any one who thoroughly grasps this truth, cannot pass a moment, or walk a yard without feeling that the world is full of life, and that what seems mysterious will in time be simple enough. Finite folk are we, with infinite possibilities.

In another place, describing a sunrise, he writes,—

Between the islands lay pink paths of beauty, faint reflex of the glowing East, as if the waters had blushed beneath the tread of angels flying to tell the world that God had given it another day. How the believers in annihilation ought to cherish every day God gives them—ought to pray for the next !

Robert Fitzroy stood silent, feasting his eyes on the scene below him. He felt that it was a luxury to live. He uttered no word ; but thanks to God for the beauty of the visible world and the health to enjoy it went heavenwards, in one of those inaudible whispers which the Recording Angel always sets down when more ceremonious prayers escape his attention.

The following was written to Mr. R. H. Horne in November :—

DEAR MR. HORNE,—Many thanks for “Cosmo de Medici,” which came this morning, and which I can see, from reading a few scenes here and there, is a very strong drama.

I greatly admire the first of the short poems, the dialogue between Franklin and his lieutenant; and suppose, after all, Lady Franklin was right in her intuition, and he still lives! I sometimes think it within the limits of possibility. I enclose a curiosity unearthed by me in the course of preparing an article on almanacs for the new Quarterly. Gives this no hope?

Faithfully yours,

MORTIMER COLLINS.

The next was written to Miss L. C. in December :—

DEAR LOUISA,—Your letter gave me intense pleasure, for it showed me that you understand what I consider to be the relation between us. But do not imagine, because I claim to have done much for you, that I am not well aware that you also have done much for me. The gardener who brings up a lovely flower is grateful to the flower for being lovely. The very first day I saw you—long before I knew you, or dreamt I should know you—I felt that I longed to know you. And during the years that have passed, the pleasure you have given me is beyond power of words. In dull and weary times, which come to the strongest of us, the word “Louisa” has charmed me. I feel, after all that has occurred, that our friendship is immortal. I had forgotten what you said about the wickedness of worshipping intellect; of course, it would be wicked. There is only One to worship and to love, Chief of all. I should grow very weary of life if I did not feel that I had God for friend. *Intellect* is merely Latin for *insight*: the man who sees God and the world best is the most intellectual.

MORTIMER.

Mortimer Collins very often amused himself by sending acrostics on post-cards to his friends, or any small matter that he wanted to say on a post-card he would put in verse. Just one

specimen of this may be interesting. Miss C. S. left her thimble at the Cottage, and a post-card with the following lines was sent to her, in December :—

DEAREST CLARA, has your nimble
Finger miss'd its silver thimble ?
Pay for this advertisement,
And the thimble shall be sent.
What's the payment for that same ?
Letters four do form its name.

The lady chose to misunderstand what was wanted in four letters, and sent the following reply on a post-card :—

Letters four there are in *gold*,
Too much for a thimble old ;
Bring it to me, sir, and you
Shall receive what is your due.

Mortimer then replied on a post-card,—

My first is what I want ; my second
The mean reward on which you reckon'd.

I.

You're fond of its contents, I know.

II.

She for her crimes was taught to low.

III.

This fills my first with little trouble.

IV.

This helps to blow a radiant bubble.

The lady sketched the answers to this on a post-card.

I have quoted this little post-card correspondence to show one of Mortimer Collins's ways of amusing himself and his friends.

He wrote a large number of acrostics in this fashion.

I think I have before mentioned that Mortimer Collins wrote New Year's letters to his friends. As he did not live another year it may be interesting to some people to read all those written on the last day of 1875. They are simply trifles, all thrown off in one afternoon ;

but I cannot help thinking it shows great kindness of heart and singularity of character, that a man working as Mortimer did, could still take the world so pleasantly, and find time to think of his friends in this way. Each piece is so exactly suited to the character of the person to whom it was written.

The first is to Mr. C. D., who was on the Coal Exchange, and whose visits to Knowl Hill had been less frequent during the year.

DEAR CHARLIE,—We wish you a happy New Year,
And hope you will come down much oftener here ;
Poetic and Cornish, we think it a pity
You should lose your old natural fun in the City,
And sink, 'mong the herd of the sordid young "fellas,"
With the shiniest hats and the smallest umbrellas.
You might give up your stunning swell dinners some-
times

To hear the soft summer susurrus of limes ;
And list while the Muses their melody trill,
As if 'twere Parnassus, though only Knowl Hill.
Come oftener, old fellow, and show you've a soul,
A diamond of wit 'mid the grime of the coal.

Remember 'tis leap year, and be on your guard,
Since the damsels are licensed to plead pretty hard.

Farewell! don't get spoilt in the quest after wealth;
At midnight, dear Charlie, we'll drink your good health.

MORTIMER AND FRANCES.

The next is to Mr. H. F., a publisher of Bibles and Prayer Books, who had during the year brought out Prayer Books with chains, that they might be carried at a lady's waist.

A Happy New Year, my dear Harry,
As 'tis Leap Year you're certain to marry.
Read the service, and find out what's what,
In the splendidest prayer-book you've got.
But though you've an ecclesiastical bias,
Fight shy of the girl that's too pious,
That on saints' days has singular whims,
And likes to be shrill in the hymns.

* * * * *

On many a feminine waist
With chains you a prayer-book have placed;
Egad, it is only your due
The book should chain some one to you.
Farewell, and accumulate wealth;
At midnight we'll drink your good health.

MORTIMER AND FRANCES.

The next is to the Librarian of the Reform

Club. The "unusual gold" refers to a testimonial presented to him by members of the Club.

DEAR CAMPKIN,—In your studious room recluse,
Will you, I wonder, wish us at the deuce
For wasting your invaluable time
With this frivolity of New Year rhyme?
No matter: Knowl Hill's rhymer wishes well
To the renown'd Librarian of Pall Mall:

Wishes right heartily that, as the Old,
So the New Year may bring unusual gold;
And wishes you fair leisure by and by,
To dally with your archæology,
And cut a gem or two of poetry.

We drink your health this midnight, you and yours:
And 'twixt us all the friendship that endures.

MORTIMER AND FRANCES.

The next is to Mortimer Collins's medical adviser and friend. He had sent a barrel of oysters to the Cottage at Christmas.

DEAR BYRON,—A Happy New Year to you!
And if we were rather more near to you,

We'd clink our three glasses together,
And laugh at the faults of the weather.

This year your kind gifts have been numerous,
Next year come yourself and be humorous;
We prefer our dear doctor who roysters,
To even a barrel of oysters;
But we really are not very loth
To give a gay welcome to both.

Be sure you remember, O Byron!
The perils that doctors environ.
Don't annihilate too many patients,
Unless they are wealthy relations;

* * * * *

Farewell and accumulate wealth,
At midnight we'll drink your good health.

MORTIMER AND FRANCES.

The next is to Mr. Littleton Hay. Orion in the second verse was Mr. R. H. Horne, who is often called Orion by his intimate friends, from the name of his epic poem. He was at this time arranging to go to America, and Mortimer Collins applied Tennyson's line to him,—

“. . . Orion sloping slowly to the west.”

DEAR LITTLETON HAY,—A Happy New Year,
 Old-fashion'd the wish, yet we like to renew it,
 And we hope it will very oft find you down here
 When business allows you to do it.

Don't fall into love you're unable to cure,
 If the minxes of Leap Year their little game try on,
 Don't worry your brain beyond what 'twill endure,
 Else you may have to slope like Orion.

At midnight we drink the Good Health of our friends,
 And you're 'mong the group we shall warmly re-
 member,
 A sunrise of hope and of pleasure it blends
 With the chill dying hours of December.

The next is to Mrs. G. S. The joke about
 respectability consists in the meaning attached
 to the word by Mrs. G. S.

DEAR JOSEPHINE,—We wish you both
 A Happy Year of quiet pleasure,
 Through married love which is not loth
 To give fair gifts beyond all measure.
 The Future shall be as the Past,
 An even life and unambitious,
 Believe me, child, the joys that last
 Reach not the vain and avaricious.

At midnight we shall drink your Health,
And, to the best of our ability,
Wish you sufficing peace and wealth,
But not too much "respectability."
Perhaps you'll see a joke in this—
Forgive a scribbler of romances,
And take a New Year's letter-kiss
From MORTIMER

and also

FRANCES.

The last is to Miss Louisa C., and is perhaps quite a gem in its way.

Lady, brave and frank and dear,
Happy be thy coming year,
May its vernal zephyrs blow
Far away the breath of foe!
May its pure calm summer air
Bring a life more calm and fair,
And sweet music of the birds
Banish slander's strident words!
May it when rich autumn ends,
And the last red leaf descends,
Know that we are still true friends.

Change the chords, and let us mix
Fun with pathos. Seventy-six

Is bissextile, lady fair—
Lovers list to maiden's prayer—
Cupid is a girl this year.
Have you not a thrill of fear
That her arrow harm may do
To an Artemis like you ?

When we drink your Midnight Health
As the old year vanisheth,
As we hear his dying breath,
We shall wish you *Love*, not *Wealth*.

MORTIMER AND FRANCES.

CHAPTER V.

JANUARY AND FEBRUARY, 1876.

MORTIMER COLLINS and his Secretary had often talked of writing a novel together, in which the scene should be laid in their village, and many of the village characters drawn. They had now put together all the materials for this story, which they called "The Village Comedy," and they agreed to commence at the moment that the New Year came in. This they did, Mortimer writing the following Sonnet, which he intended for the motto of the first chapter, but which the Secretary ruled out as being inappropriate.

Gone is the irrecoverable year,
With all its joy and trouble. January
Begins, and we, with courage gay and airy,

Begin a novel. It is pleasant here :
 The midnight fire burns frostily and clear ;
 Soul prompting Fantasy, the frolic fairy,
 The poet's guide through regions of vagary,
 Shows the vague sea o'er which we have to steer.
 The Hero comes into our haunted room,
 We see the lovely Lady's passionate grief,
 As some foul scandal her fair bosom stirs ;
 The plausible Villain grins amid the gloom ;
 Then follow to our infinite relief
 A motley multitude of villagers.

Mortimer Collins writes in the *Loiterer* of January the 1st, as follows :—

A well-known writer is good enough to thank me for certain points in my loiterings, and I hereby reciprocate his appreciation. As a fact the commonwealth of letters would be a great power in England if men of letters were less jealous and more ready to be *bon camarade*. So when a strange hand is held out to grasp mine, faith, I like it. We are all working together ; if we don't quite agree with each other's ways of work, the end is clear. What do we want ? The poetry of life. We leave its prose to millionaires.

This appreciation of others and freedom from

jealousy was a great point in the literary character of Mortimer Collins.

In the *Loiterer* of the 8th he writes,—

A gentleman of high standing and rare accomplishments remarked in conversation 'some time ago, that "literary men are best at a distance." I believe he is fond of a paradox. At the same time he may have had reason for what he said. There are literary men who contrive to make themselves offensive in general society. There is the man of real genius, never thoroughly accepted by the public, who revenges himself by caustic epigram at the dinner-table. There is the man to whom anything which can be caricatured is irresistible, and who puts all his acquaintances into novels with the slight disguise of names, a practice which cannot be too severely reprobated. There is the man who cannot tolerate average folly, and comes down with sledge-hammer force upon any one who talks nonsense. There is the youthful poetaster who likes to recite his love-lyrics to young ladies, when they would far prefer some gayer amusement with some less conceited young gentleman. In ordinary society, I concede that all these people, and more that I could indicate, are intolerable bores. Perhaps the *Ursus Maximus* of letters was dear old Samuel Johnson, yet had no man heartier friends, and he was well beloved by S^r Joshua Reynolds, the

most courteous and elegant of men. Genius has its drawbacks. It is believed that Shakespeare occasionally drank too much; it is certain that Pope libelled ladies and played ungentlemanly tricks. One would rather have the faults—not to mention the genius—of William Shakespeare than of Alexander Pope. However, the fact is that the Man of Letters can only be understood by the most highly civilized society, such as that of Athens in the days of Pericles, by Rome in those of Augustus. I suppose neither Mr. Gladstone nor Mr. Disraeli would maintain that he is the equal of Mæcenas, and it is certain that no King of England since Henry VIII, has been equal to Augustus Cæsar. But look at Horace's familiar verses to the Minister? look at Virgil's easy letters to the Emperor? Mæcenas wrote uncommonly bad verse, and would probably have translated Homer as weakly as Mr. Gladstone; but he knew good poetry when he saw it, and he knew how to reward and encourage a poet.

If Horace had lived in England he would have had a paltry pension of fifty pounds, instead of a country estate on which he could live as a gentleman without a care and devote his power to the benefit of Rome.

In January Mortimer Collins wrote,—

The well-known firm of Cope, in Liverpool, issue a monthly periodical styled "Cope's Tobacco Plant."

Therein I wrote eight lines of rhyme, warning young ladies against smoking cigarettes. This brought me in return a mighty Christmas box—a box of a thousand cigarettes! Verily this will be a great boon to a good many friends: not often do I smoke myself. Verse at one hundred and twenty-five cigarettes a line is remunerative.

The next I quote is from the *Loiterer* of January 15th,—

“The mesmerizer snow.” Charming phrase that of Browning’s. Snow is mesmerizing us at this moment—casting a strange misty feeling over the world. The east wind drives the sharp white shower along the road outside my lawn. I leave that east wind to its own devices. I get out some old books, put chestnuts to roast on the bars, ask my *placens uxor* to mull some claret in the etna, with sugar and cinnamon, and loiter in my bookroom instead of loitering out of doors. And looking at the poem wherein Mr. Browning uses that magical phrase, in the edition of 1863 I am carried back a dozen years or so, with numerous recollections. *Tempus edax rerum* is a great saying. Was that the year of Beale and the Park-palings? I know that I was staying at Hatchett’s in Piccadilly, in the famous year of riot, and had, with a friend, to fight my way home through a multitude of rougls. But on reflection, it

was later, that ridiculous row, for Lord Palmerston died in 1865, and we were forcing our way home from the club which has set up its quarters in the pleasant house of the cheery descendant of Leofric and Godgifu.

The next is from the *Loiterer* of the same date. Mortimer Collins's books which the Secretary has around her consist of about a thousand well-chosen volumes, which are perhaps somewhat like Charles Lamb's books in being shabby and well-used. Many of them contain autograph letters from their authors placed in the fly-leaves, or letters from eminent men.

I preserve all correspondence that is worth anything, and gum it into the books of its writers or of those whom it concerns. So I have a pleasant series of autograph letters in my books. I mean to leave them to the Plymouth Cottonian Library when I pass into another part of the universe, seeing that Plymouth is my birthplace, and that I have excellent reasons for delighting in the soldierly and erudite family of Cotton.

The Secretary belonged to the Cotton family. Mr. R. H. Horne (Orion) was a visitor at the

Cottage at Christmas time, and one evening, while playing the guitar, he suddenly stopped because Mortimer was not attending. Mortimer promised to be more attentive, and when the music commenced again he wrote a sonnet, which seemed to take only five minutes in the composition. Perhaps he had thought it out while apparently inattentive. This sonnet was printed in the *Loiterer*, with the following remark by Mortimer Collins :—

Here is a sonnet, written when Orion was playing his guitar, which may perchance be worth the printer's trouble in setting up.

O dreamer of Orion ! Back again
 Thou hast return'd from the far southern life,
 The glory and the suffering and the strife,
 A wondrous burial, but not in vain.

For thou bring'st home to us the ancient strain,
 And our small school with poetasters rife
 Shudders at satire cutting like a knife,
 Wonders at music diamonds dropp'd like rain.

I love the echo of thine ancient youth
 I love thy second youth, o'erfill'd with power.
 I love the joyous tone of thy guitar.

Revive, O Poet, full of strength and truth !
Astonish rhymers of a weaker hour !
We hail the radiance of thy evening star.

“Orion” replied on his guitar, the words and music improvised. I did not make a note of the words, but I remember they commenced, “O Quinbus Flestrin ! Quinbus Flestrin,” being the name Orion applied to Mortimer because of his great size.

The next is from the *Loiterer* of January 22. Mortimer Collins was once the Editor of the *Plymouth Mail*, and Mr. Latimer was the editor of the chief Liberal paper. Thus they were political enemies. Mortimer Collins could hit very hard, but in private life he was always ready to shake hands with his political antagonist.

“The animosities perish ; the humanities are eternal ;” I cherish that great saying of Christopher North’s, the Sir Launcelot of literature, “the kindest man that ever struck with sword.” I am agreeably reminded of it by a passage in Monday’s *Western Daily Mercury*, the leading Liberal journal of my native town, the Queen of the West. It is a pleasant comment on

that passage in the *Loiterer*, wherein I state that I shall leave my little book-store to the Plymouth Cottonian Library. It specially refers to the gift-books from friends who know that I am fond of literature matured by age. I had mentioned Conrad Gesner's oak-bound Martial of 1544, and the erudite Marcellus Malpighius of 1687. The editor of the *Mercury* and I had many a rapier fight over politics in days half forgotten, so quickly move events, and when Mr. Latimer thus offers his ungauntleted hand in knightly fashion to his old opponent, I gladly do likewise, and thank him heartily for his hope that it will be long before Plymouth gets my little legacy.

Seeing how soon after this the end came, this last sentence reads very sadly.

Mortimer Collins often received anonymous letters concerning his writings. Some one seems to have been very angry with the *Loiterer* which I quoted a few pages back, and to have written an angry letter thereon. I quote from the *Loiterer* of February 5.

The *Loiterer* has met with a congenial critic, and is happy. That critic says that he takes for himself and his family eight copies weekly of this paper, and is

therefore in my opinion a thoroughly wise man. If I venture to controvert any of his strictures, it is with diffidence and humility. I am but a Loiterer; he is Aristarchus. He says my égotism is most offensive: that I am always talking about my eating and drinking: that I have positively ventured to solace myself in the wintry weather with roasted chestnuts and mulled claret. "Because thou art virtuous shall there be no more cakes and ale?" I confess the chestnuts and claret, and heartily wish the latter had been Chateau Lafitte, which it was not by any means. My kind critic proceeds to object to my having a lawn before my house, but I can assure him it is a very little one. If it were larger I might ask him to come and smoke a cigar upon it; but I feel certain, from his splendid style, that he would dwarf it utterly, as if he were Captain Lemuel Gulliver in the city of Lilliput. Further, he remarks that I am in a state of quiet but continuous "brag" (elegant word!), and that I consider myself "better off and wiser than the rest of the world!" This is delightful. I confess to being much worse off than most folk—and certainly than my critic, whose style and logic must have made his fortune long ago—for when I manage to make both ends meet, it is by a pretty strong tug at the rope.

But "wiser!" Nay, this is hard, I am but a Loiterer in the byways of literature. If I may not taste the fount of Parnassus, at least I may hear its immortal

murmur. I know well where the wise men go. They haunt the Stock Exchange; they write M.P. after their names; they spend more on a single banquet than I on the modest dinners of a year; I envy them not. The children of this world are wise in their generation. My kind critic, who takes eight copies of this journal, and therefore claims a right to apply a cat-o-nine-tails to my shoulders, is one of the wise. O Sapientia! There were wise men in Greece, and there also were wise men in Gotham: and perchance the great saying of the Lacedæmonian sage might be worth my critic's study.

It may here be remarked that it is quite impossible to write much, or indeed to be in any way much before the public, without annoying somebody. You utter a free opinion without an idea that it will be taken as a personal insult by some one who thinks differently.

I never could understand the temper of mind which induces a man to say "You believe the three angles of a triangle are equal to two right angles, and therefore you are a scoundrel and a wretch, and have not paid your washerwoman for years." But there are such delightfully illogical people wandering about; I charitably hope that my amiable critic is not one of them. And I hereby thank him for his epistle, which amused me greatly as I loitered with three dogs as comrades up and down the lawn he so despises. I hope he will not be angry that I laughed just a little.

On Valentine's Day a case of wine arrived from Messrs. Wace, with instructions that it was ordered to be sent by Sir William Clayton as a valentine. The following reply was sent to Sir William :—

My dear Sir William . . . Thanks for wine :
Truly no choicer Valentine

 Could come in February.

When thrush and merle do sing and pair,

And something stirs in softer air,

Which makes the ardent youngsters dare

 To conjugate *Amare*.

The pale straw-tinted Liebfraumilch

Deserves its baptism ; soft as silk

 Yet full of strength I know it :

While Chambertin, imperial wine,

Is full of energy divine,

And makes a poetaster shine

 As radiant as a poet.

'Twas friendly to remember us :

A pleasant gift, well chosen thus,

 Speaks wisdom in the giver.

When Valentine comes round again

May perfect health and pleasure reign

Amid your beautiful demesne,

 Beside the royal river.

The usual number of Valentines were written this year. The first is to Miss Louisa C.

VALENTINE, 1876.

The owl may hoot, the bat may hiss,
 Yet doves will coo, and sweethearts kiss :
 I do not deem the deed amiss—
 What say you, lady mine ?
 O mellow ouzel, sparkling thrush,
 Now let your rich love-music gush !
 Soar lark, and with thy torrent-rush
 Awake St. Valentine !

Grows many a noxious poison-weed
 In ditch from foulness never freed,
 But why such venom was decreed
 I care not to divine.
 Content am I with fragrant flowers
 Uprising after softest showers—
 Dim violets that deck thy bowers,
 O gay St. Valentine !

The felon fog of Slander may
 Brood upon earth for many a day :
 A sudden swift destroying ray !
 And Truth's strong sun will shine.

Our love is pure, our sky is blue,
 We dread no mist, my Lady Loo,
 So this fair morning, I and you,
 We'll greet St. Valentine.

MORTIMER.

The next is to Miss M. A. S. The first line is taken from her answer to Mortimer's Valentine of the previous year.

"Who's this comes riding o'er the snow?"
 'Tis Margaret's sweetheart well I know,
 With bold bright eye and cheeks aglow,
 Disdaining weather.
 Keen hail may meet him on his way,
 And fierce fork'd lightning zigzag play,
 He swears it is a summer day
 When you're together.

Pray who is he, fair Margaret,
 Whom you have caught in Love's light net?
 I guess you'll give no answer yet
 I'll not importune.
 Ev'n if you say his Valentine
 Is twenty times as nice as mine,
 I'm not the fellow to repine
 At his good fortune.

The next is to Miss C. S.

CLARA, here's St. Valentine !
Coronal of myrtle twine
 In your soft dark tresses.
Do I dream, or is it true,
Cupid flies the bright air through,
 Laden with caresses ?

From his mother's islet soft
See the urchin shoots aloft,
 Like a white bird wending
Over ocean, flying fast
Till he finds his home at last,
 On Doll's House descending.

Do not drive the imp away ;
Time it is you felt his sway,
 And for reason weighty,
Leap Year, when the ladies reign,
Clearly will not come again
 Until 1880.

The next is to Mrs. G. S.

Gay as ever comes the Spring,
 Josephine !
Merle and mavis 'gin to sing,
 Boughs between ;

Yellow primrose, violet blue,
Leaves and moss are peeping through ;
Soon the bare boughs will renew
Tender green.

Springs may come and Springs may go,
Lady mine !
Love's eternal, well you know,
Love's divine.
Brighter glows his purple wing
Every time the jocund Spring
Doth, to greet you, gaily bring
Valentine.

The next is to Mrs. I. V.

DEAR MRS. VIZETELLY,
I'm not profound like Shelley,
I haven't Swinburne's passion,
That people think so fine ;
My rhymes are light and airy,
And fit for February,
And so, in ancient fashion,
I pen a Valentine.

Though girl and boy no longer,
Our friendship may be stronger
Than trivial love romances,
Which youngsters deem divine.

May Fate no more be spiteful,
 But bring fair days delightful,
 Bright health and happy fancies,
 So runs my Valentine !

The next is to Miss M. S. of Caversham, a little lady of fifteen years old, who had not before had a Valentine from Mortimer.

You came, a sprightly apparition,
 A very pleasant, piquant vision,
 To call the other day,
 When I with pain podagral pester'd,
 In chimney-corner sat sequester'd,
 Expecting nought so gay.

O mirthful maiden, fair home-treasure,
 In thanks I wish you health and pleasure,
 And happy dreams divine !
 Though future verse may touch you nearer,
 Believe me none can be sincerer
 Than this brief Valentine !

Several Valentines were also written for the Secretary to various old friends. I think I may quote two or three of them. The first is to Mr. C. D., who was on the Coal Exchange, and

whose visits to Knowl Hill were becoming less frequent.

Leap Year, Charlie ! Valentine !
Amorous challenge ne'er decline ;
Do not let your gallant soul
Shrivel like a lump of coal,
In the City furnace burning,
And to dust too soon returning.

You are in your manly prime,
Take the pleasure of the time ;
When your brightest years are spent,
What's the use of cent. per cent. ?
Will you shun the vernal air,
Just to be a millionaire ?

Credibly 'tis said, in Hades
Coals are plenty, few the ladies ;
Do you really wish to range
In that coming Coal Exchange ?
No, enjoy existence here—
Troubadour and cavalier !

The next is to Mortimer Collins's cousin,
Henry Frowde, the London manager of the
Oxford University Press.

HARRY, in Holy Land of Bible
And Book of Prayer,
Of course a Valentine's a libel,
And spoils the air ;
And yet one fact that I observe is
That Book contains the Marriage Service.

The vernal signs are tempting, Harry ;
'Tis Leap Year too,
When maids who are in haste to marry
Have leave to woo.
Don't bind too fast the nuptial links ;
Don't get snapt up by any minx.

So my unprejudiced advice is,
When Valentine
Precipitates the fatal crisis,
Ask leave—that's mine.
I soon shall judge (I am not jealous)
If she deserves the best of fellows.

The next is in the manner of Swinburne, to
Mr. Littleton Hay, who was fond of using Swin-
burnian rhymes and metres.

The season of rashness and rapture,
The season of frolic and fun ;
There possibly may be a capture,
My friend, ere that season is done.

You think in your pride you are far less
 Prone than others to wander away,
 In Lotosland, never cigarless,
 O Littleton Hay!

The nymphs of our amorous Swinburne,
 The maids of Shakespearian time,
 The nymphs who with impulse of sin burn,
 The girls who are pure in their prime,
 A festival joyous they keep here,
 With flowerets their tresses are gay;
 For is it not—is it not Leap Year?
 O Littleton Hay!

So pause in the midst of tobacco,
 And at the wild revelry glance,
 And say, *Adjuvente Iaccho*,
 I'll certainly join in the dance.
 But remember, poetical student,
 'Tis Leap Year and Valentine's Day,
 And with every maiden be prudent,
 O Littleton Hay!

The following letter to Mr. Campkin was written on Feb. 16. The article on Almanacks was in the *New Quarterly* of Jan., 1876. The geometric Valentine was a book of diagrams

by a man who fancied he had arrived at the quadrature of the circle. Mortimer Collins was exceedingly fond of mathematics, and would often work at it for recreation from literary work.

MY DEAR CAMPKIN,—In my verse in the Almanack article (p. 418) “completion” was printed “complexion”!

Even so “anachromont” is typographic English for “anachronism.”

Fancy “ycleped”! What an atrocity!

Thanks for your geometric Valentine. I must draw a few diagrams before I can discover where the Canadian speculator is wrong, which of course he must be; and I must wait till I can buy a new pair of compasses, which can't be done out of London.

That — has not called does not surprise me. He's an odd fish. He thinks himself the centre of the universe. Are all poets like him?

The Missus means to write, so I leave her to answer your questions.

Yours ever,

MORTIMER COLLINS.

CHAPTER VI.

MARCH TO JULY, 1876.

ON the 4th of March, Mortimer Collins writes thus in the *Loiterer* :—

I have this week voted by ballot for the first time in my life. I cannot say I like it. The ballot may be a necessity in clubs, very likely—that is a point on which I express no opinion—but in political voting it is, in my judgment, most humiliating. A gentleman who had the same duty to perform told me that when he went through the process of secret voting he felt “a dreadful sneak.” That phrase tersely describes the feeling of an Englishman, accustomed to a fair and open encounter, when compelled to vote in the dark, and to conceal the name of the man he votes for. It seems impossible that a system can last which is so abhorrent to all the manlier instincts of our strong and fearless race.

On the 20th of March, just four months

before his death, Mortimer Collins wrote as follows:—

Snow on the vernal equinox with white violets in full bloom. Just seven days later than I noted it six years ago. The seasons do not improve. The old-fashioned summers, when there was

“A strange superfluous glory in the air,”

are memories of the past. When did we last sit on the lawn, day after day, glad of the shadow of full-foliaged trees, stimulated by Apollo's actinic shafts? It seems ages ago. Is Helios growing weary? Does Hertha feel a flagging energy? I fancy not. This is a world of cycles, and periods of fine and bad weather alternate on much the same principle as that which produces Tory and Whig ministries, ritualism and rationalism, striped petticoats and crinoline, good and bad luck at cards. I am an optimist. The longer my ill luck lasts, the more assured am I of a run of good luck. Who waits, wins. When I am ill, I habitually look forward to getting well, and I do it. Some fellows no sooner feel a pain in their little finger than they proclaim their intention to die, and very often fulfil that intention. Of course it is absurd for snow to be persistently falling on the 20th of March, but when I find Gilbert White recording snow late in April, and ice as thick as a crown piece on the 7th of June, 1787, I

conclude that our grandfathers were as badly off as we. And, through the calmly-falling snow, which is rapidly whitening the yews and hollies and laurels, I have a vision of the same lawn in July, when the limes, now leafless, will be sun-proof, and the turf, now snow-covered, will be greener than emerald, softer than velvet. There is a missel-thrush singing riotously through the wild weather, for he is wooing his mate, and the bitter air cannot freeze his lyric force; in July he will be silent, save for sometimes a twitter in morning and evening twilight. Surely he foresees summer, or he could not sing so rarely.

A week later Mortimer Collins wrote again about this same missel-thrush as follows:—

While among the birds, I may remark that all through the wintry weather—from quite the beginning of February—a missel-thrush has been cheering us by continual song. He begins at five in the morning; he sings till seven at night. He has really made me feel as “jolly as a sandboy” (the small shrimp so called that frisks in the maddest way about the sands)—on days almost suicidal. But to-day, turning over Gilbert White, I am reminded that the missel-thrush “is called in Hampshire and Sussex the storm-cock, because his song is supposed to forbode windy, wet weather.” Storm-cock, indeed! So my musical friend up in the

naked lime boughs, singing madly from before sunrise to after sunset, only pausing to descend and tug a luckless worm out of the turf, you are a herald of wind and snow, are you? And I have all this while been admiring your cheerfulness in adverse weather. One learns a little every day.

The following were to Miss Louisa C. on the 1st of April. They were intended to cheer her under the annoyance caused by slanderous gossip:—

He surely is an April Fool
Who does not find this world a school,
Where tasks are often hard, 'tis true—
But there are pleasant lessons too.

He is an April Fool, I ween,
Who cares one whit for spite and spleen,
Since night will always yield to day,
And love can drive small cares away.

He is an April Fool who stays
To sermons sour on summer days;
A wiser soul, refresh'd by prayer,
Will seek the anthems of the air.

He is an April Fool who frets
O'er trivial troubles, vain regrets,

When spring is here with sweet soft weather,
Which loving friends can share together.

But you, to whom this rhyme we write,
Lover of candour, truth, and light,
When worries come keep calm and cool,
Then will you be no April Fool.

MORTIMER AND FRANCES.

On the 3rd of April Mortimer Collins wrote to the editor of the *Reading Mercury* concerning birds. The letter is worth quoting, as it gives some of Mortimer Collins's observations on the birds in his garden.

SIR,—I read in the local portion of the *Wargrave and Knowl Hill Parish Magazine* certain "Hints for the New Horticultural Committee," which are calculated to alarm the owners of quiet gardens and ornamental trees. The writer suggests that the village boys should make collections of birds' eggs and of curious nests for exhibition at the parochial flower-show. As this is just the period when indiscriminate birds'-nesting does most mischief, I hasten to enter my protest against this recommendation. Boys will be only too glad of clerical authority for breaking through hedges and climbing trees and decimating our song-birds. In

what my friend Mr. Matthew Arnold calls a "bird-haunted English lawn" of less than an acre, close to the high road, I am fortunate enough to watch whole colonies of birds—blackbirds, thrushes, missel-thrushes, starlings, wrens, robins, bullfinches, greenfinches, chaffinches, and many others. The nightingales breed close by in the woods, and have often kept me awake at night with their song. My most illustrious visitors were a pair of fine gross-beaks, which came over in January of 1873, when the weather was bitterly cold. All the guns of the village were out after them, for the cock bird looks as bright as a kingfisher when he flies, but happily they found shelter in some firs in a neighbouring garden, where they brought up a young brood. Finding out that I fed my pigeons with peas, they were my regular guests; the hard food reminded them of their natural pine-kernels. They remained till Easter Monday, when a warm air and a south wind induced them to take flight, probably for Norway. There is, I believe, no other authentic instance of the pine-gross-beak's breeding so far south, although a couple were shot in the Swan Garden at Hall Place many years ago.

My occasional notes on this matter in the *Times* have brought me much pleasant correspondence with lovers of birds, and Admiral Baillie Hamilton and others have expressed their surprise that in so small a space so many birds will congregate. But, like all living creatures, birds soon learn their friends. They

sing as you pass near them. As to the robins, they will perch on my table or my knee when I am writing out of doors. Last year a pair of blackbirds brought up two broods of four in the fork of a laurel, and showed no fear when I paid them a visit of inspection.

MORTIMER COLLINS.

In April, Mortimer Collins wrote as follows :—

Spring at last. Why, we shall be having the swallow soon. Verily, it is hard to believe, after the long, keen winter through which we have passed. It has been often said—I know not by whom said first—that we enjoy autumn most in our youth and spring in our age, The reason is reasonable enough, namely, that as you grow older the melancholy of autumn grows more oppressive. I must have been born old. I always loved spring, of its promise of the royal summer. It is the herald of the king of the year. Its violets fearless of snow, and wind-blown daffodils which gave Wordsworth his only knowledge of odour, and celandine that shines with glossy gold at the elm-tree root, are the banners of the vanguard. Trumpet of thrush and blackbird, fife of robin and wren, prepare us for the cuckoo, untirable bugler, and for the divine chorus of nightingales that will sing King Summer to sleep behind the crimson curtains of sunset. Yes; I have always liked Spring: and this year I like it all the

more, because that rebel winter has been so hard to kill.

In the *Loiterer* of April 8th, Mortimer Collins mentions his old friend John Ormsby.

How pleasant it is to come across a book by an old friend whom you have not seen for many a year. Such a pleasure I have just had in reading *Stray Papers*, by John Ormsby (Smith, Elder, and Co.). He was irreverently known as Jack Ormsby in the days when we explored the suburban beauty of London, a gay set of Bohemians, and dined together afterwards at the "Cheshire Cheese," fighting over politics, literature, and salad-mixing in the maddest manner. Well, the years have passed, Jack—I beg pardon, John—Ormsby's hand has not lost its skill. The keen, observant eye, the pleasant sub-acid humour, the easy, unconscious style akin to Thackeray's, but with less mannerism, go together to produce a charming book of essays.

Knowl Hill,

April 24, 1876.

DEAR CAMPKIN,—If you look into Saturday's *Spectator*, you will see some rhyme of mine, *The Gräfin von Rosenau*. The fiendish printer has printed "disposed" for "deposed" in v. 3, l. 4—thus spoiling the best

line of the lot. I wrote them for the *World*, and saw them in proof: but Edmund Yates thought them too strong or too weak, and did not use them. So some of my Easter visitors proposed the *Spectator*, and one of them copied the verses, as I thought my fist would not be welcome in Wellington Street, so there they are, misprinted.

In haste,

M. AND F. C.

On Easter Monday, Mortimer Collins wrote as follows:—

Easter Monday. The Queen's (or Empress's) stag-hounds meet at Maidenhead Thicket. A procession of sight-seers pass the lawn on which I loiter. Wonderful are the various vehicles. All the ramshackle shandrydans in the Home Counties convey all the queerest-looking people you ever saw to the neighbourhood of the "Coach and Horses." Mr. Mason's supply of ale and spirituous liquors will run short to-day. Well, the scene is picturesque no doubt, but I have seen hounds meet in a workmanlike way too often to care for this annual cockneyism. Moreover, I don't think much of following a tame deer across country.

At this moment there are four poets (one major and three minor) and a lady novelist in the room, all chattering and laughing at once. If, therefore, my

loiterings are slightly discontinuous, I throw myself on the mercy of the considerate reader. We must all take holiday. Let us take it *sadly*, as Froissart said was the habit of Englishmen in the fourteenth century. By the way, how often that passage is misquoted to show that we English are dull, stolid fellows! Are we? "Sad" in the fourteenth century meant *steadfast*?

The next letter to Mr. Campkin, the librarian of the Reform Club, was written on the 28th of April. Mortimer Collins mentions not wearing a dress-coat at the Mansion House. He seldom dined out during the last eight years of his life, and when he did he always asked to be allowed to wear his velvet coat. The Lady Mayoress had on this occasion given him permission to do so.

The novel alluded to was the "Village Comedy," written by Mortimer Collins and his Secretary.

Knowl Hill,
Dies Veneris.

MY DEAR CAMPKIN,—I shall be glad to see your Committee Report. I suppose your library grows fast. I should very well like to be a librarian with carte-

blanche as to book-buying : still more, however, would your lay-preachership arride me. Verily I would attempt to deserve your too-friendly eulogy, and would not spare the paradox.

If you pine for a taste of "Flora and the country green," why not put yourself outside the London and Oxford Coach at Hatchett's (10 a.m.) and be dropped at the gate of Poet's Cottage at 1.30? We mean to make Carleton Blyth, Quadrigarius, bring down our friends free. But come not to morrow week, for we are going to stay with the Lord Mayor and dine with the Literati. I, coming up from my hermitage into the brilliant assembly, expect to be painfully reminded of Jerrold's reply to the minor man of letters who said, "We both row in the same boat." . . . "Ay, but not with the same skulls." However, I mean to enjoy myself, and not to wear a dress coat! We are going to St. Paul's on Sunday in state (Cæcilius in a straw hat), and there is to be a clerical luncheon afterwards. Here's dissipation for an aged poetaster, as an amiable critic called me years ago. You know the illustrious Hoby, your opposite neighbour. The Reform Club near Hoby's is, I am told, a frequent address. The Missus at Easter ordered a couple of pair of shoes for me there, but I hear nothing of them.

Will you drop in and tell him that one Mortimer Collins wants his shoes? Perhaps if you could induce your resplendent and genial hall porter to go across, the effect would be finer still.

[Seriously, would you mind looking in at Hoby's, and reminding them about Mortimer's shoes?

F. G.]

Do look at the second page of this week's *Pictorial World*, the Missus's new novel is advertised there. Can't you imagine how proud she is?

We are truly sorry to hear such bad news of your son. Milton's resolve to

. . . Argue not
Against Heaven's hand or will
Nor bate a jot
Of heart or hope—

is the only thing for such troubles.

My wife sends her love. We hope to call when in town.

àel (more Greek),

MORTIMER AND FRANCES.

Mr. Campkin objected to Mortimer's use of Greek in his writings.

The allusion to the illness of Mr. Campkin's only son recalls a sad coincidence to my mind. He died of heart disease (after rheumatic fever) at the hour that Mortimer was buried, while Mr. Campkin was standing by Mortimer's open

grave; Mortimer also having died of heart disease, which was supposed to have arisen from rheumatic fever.

In the *Loiterer* of April 29th, Mortimer Collins writes thus of Lord Lyttelton, whom he had known by correspondence:—

The sad death of Lord Lyttelton will be greatly felt. All the world that knows anything knew him as a fine scholar and a man of public spirit, which is a different thing from party spirit. I knew him by correspondence merely of rather a controversial kind, as a very courteous gentleman. I cannot help thinking that a man of his intellect might have been saved from perishing of melancholy. I know of my own knowledge what an accountable depression is. The very absence of care will sometimes produce it. The most delicate and sensitive intellects are likeliest to suffer from it. When it grows chronic, the sufferer wants something more than a "personal attendant," specially instructed not to let him have a razor. He wants change and cheer, and the intercourse of friends. What says Hermann Boerhaave (*Aphorismi de Cognoscendis et Curandis Morbis*) under the article "Melancholia"? *Motus, exercitia, equitationes, navigationes*, of course. Let the man who grows weary of existence because he sees no fresh achievement be urged to change his sphere of action,

to break beyond his groove. Had I been Lord Lyttelton, and felt unutterably weary of life, I would have chartered a yacht to the epic isles of Greece, and followed Odysseus in his wanderings, and sought for a Cyclops to evade or a Circe to defy.

“A Fight with Fortune,” 3 vols. [Hurst and Blackett], was published in April.

The book is not by any means a work of art as a novel; it was written hurriedly, week by week, for a newspaper. Nevertheless it is amusing, and full of pretty thoughts. Mortimer Collins again tries here, as in his previous work, “Blacksmith and Scholar,” to show that it is possible to unite manual labour with refinement and education. In this case his hero is a glazier [but of good blood], who educates himself.

The book is dedicated to W. J. R. Cotton, M.P., who was then Lord Mayor.

I will quote a few sentences where the author gives us some of his own opinions.

Talking of his hero being a poet (most of his heroes are poets), he says,—

Most young men do write verse, and fancy them-

selves poets; and why shouldn't they? It amuses them, and doesn't hurt the public so long as they don't publish their productions. But whether we are scholars or only plumbers and glaziers, or bakers or candlestick-makers, we can all put a little poetry into life if we please. A man may be a poet without being able to write verse. There may be a poem in a picture, or in the arrangement of a few flowers, or in the building of a church or a house, even in the putting in of a pane of glass. The whole creation itself is to the poetic mind one grand long poem, of which a fresh piece can be read every day.

Amongst the books in Charles Cotton's bedroom was one entitled "The Genuine Works of Charles Cotton, Esq.," its date was 1715. A quaint book, with illustrations even quaintier than the letter-press; but our young plumber and glazier was proud of it. He could see it was not the highest form of poetry. He tingled all through to produce something poetic, if only it were a poetic hose for a pump, or a poetic pane of glass.

He was at the age of inchoate ideas. We all pass through that stage, all of us who are worth anything; and then we pass a few years in wondering at our own folly, and then we begin. Experience has taught us, and the world has to listen when we speak.

In the next paragraph I quote, Mortimer Collins so completely shows his own character.

Great agglomerations of men lead to splendid results; famous towns are famous things. Yet how many, “in populous city pent,” must pine for closer intercourse with nature! I always deem there is deep significance in the myth of the giant Antæus, who fought with the demi-god Hercules. When Hercules could lift him from the ground he was too much for him. When Antæus again touched his Mother Earth, he got new vigour. Does not Hercules symbolize the antagonist destiny, against which every man of us has to strive? Are we not freshened for the unequal fight when, like Antæus, we seek the bosom of our generous mother, and drink the wine of winds, and cool our wearied eyes with the emerald woods, and suffer the laughing river to rock our cradle of a boat?

The lovingness of all wild creatures is delightful to the man who has to live in an atmosphere of suspicion. The robin perches on my knee or my table as I scribble on the lawn; the nightingale sings, close to my open window, a happy serenade; it is hard to believe that flowers and trees do not recognize those who love them.

“ And ’tis my faith, that every flower
Enjoys the air it breathes,”

says Wordsworth, and I am very much of the same faith.

In the next paragraph the author is again on his favourite subject of the true lady.

He was true knight and troubadour. To him a lady was a divinity. Such men are rather rare in these days of the Divorce Court and the breach of promise action; but they still exist. To put it tersely, there are a few gentlemen who believe in the existence of ladies. That such should be the case is a remarkable fact. The loud woman, the fast woman, the scientific woman have done their utmost to abolish the lady. Ah, but without success. She lives still, in happy corners of England where progress is unknown, and where she grows, a joyous radiant flower, unspoiled by algebraic or ecclesiastic watering-pot.

And here again is the author on a favourite subject:—

It is a matter to be remarked that the ethereal tincture of the soul is the same all through. A tailor or a cobbler who does his work well is on the same level as a general or statesman who does his work well. And here were three men, an Italian marquis, an English gardener, an English glazier who got on well from the first. "What condescension in the marquis!" says Boots de Boots, whose great-grandfather was a waiter at Boodle's. I don't see it. I honour a good

English workman as much as I honour a true English gentleman. Both are perfect in their kind. They are convertible. Cannot a gentleman be a workman, or a workman a gentleman ?

In the next paragraph I quote, the author speaks rather severely of curates. He had great respect for the clerical office, as he has shown by his writings, and numbered several of the clergy amongst his friends—men for whom he had a high respect. And if in his later works, especially his last work, “The Village Comedy,” he has painted a clergyman in rather strong colours, it was from no want of reverence for his profession. He says,—

I think girls should learn Latin, if only to read Cicero De Amicitia. One of the weak points in modern life is the decay of real friendship. It is perishing among men, and seems to have altogether perished among women. It is a flower of life worth careful culture ; and I rejoice to say that I have a few friends (a very few) who would do for me what I would do for them, even though life were on the risk. And among them are ladies ! A note of ejaculation is needed. Can a lady, thinks the ordinary dolt, be a

perfect friend to a man without what your Old Bailey barrister would call "ulterior purposes"? I trow not. It must be Platonic love, or love warmer than the Platonic. Dear reader, seest thou the result hereof? It shuts women out from the friendship of men; shunts them—reduces them to converse with nobody save curates and lady's maids. The dull folk in an agricultural parish, if they see a lady walking with a gentleman, instantly whisper something wrong; the parson, if he is a young fool, brought into the world to disestablish the Church, picks up this faintly whispered gossip; after which that lady's life becomes a misery to her. Of course her relations get frightened, and it is always your nearest and dearest who say the falsest things about you. As the wittiest Canon of St. Paul's remarked, the most dangerous animal to let loose among women is a wild curate.

That Mortimer Collins really appreciated a good clergyman will be shown by the following sentence, written about the same time as the last paragraph I quoted:—

Could we but sketch, with the pen of true genius, the model Rector of an English parish, what a grand picture he would be on the canvas. Vandyke should paint him. The man who, with a clear view of the

high central truth, has a deep sympathy with humanity in its worse troubles; who turns undazzled from the Great White Throne and carries its light into wretched hovels and into the minds of wretched men; who strives to interpret the thought of God by the work of what we call nature; who deems no science useless, no creature soulless—that is the true parson. He, the *persona ecclesiæ* (*vide* Blackstone), through whom sounds the Voice of the Church, should exhaust the knowledge of the world as a mere contribution to the infinite science of Theology. When we have such a Clerisy as that, we need fear no disestablishment.

In the next paragraph the author gives his experience of life in a village.

Your villager, especially in the South and West of England, decides entirely on the quality of a neighbour by the company he keeps. If a man has not time to exchange morning calls with county people, or if he cannot stand the annoyance of their sadly insipid conversation, they quarrel with him, and will talk scandal about him horribly, and go so far as to say that he poisoned his washerwoman to avoid paying her bill. Luckily Lord Lieutenants, Deputy Lieutenants, High Sheriffs, and other dignitaries of the sort, were made for calling purposes; so, gentle reader, if you take a house in a country place, and don't want

to be tabooed as a pariah, hire your dignitary! A good dinner will do it, especially if you bring from town a friend from White's or Brooks's who dwells within the pale of exclusive society, and who will, like Theodore Hook, know a man in the country whom he couldn't possibly know in London. After that you are safe. The county recognizes you at the recommendation of a chief magnate, and you will be at once free to all dinner-parties, balls, garden-parties that the minor magnates give. I don't envy you, *mon ami*. Those pleasures pall; I would rather, like Charles Fox, sit with my back to a haystack on a summer afternoon, reading the "Prometheus Bound" of Æschylus, and watching the blackbirds eat my cherries.

In the next sentence he writes the idea which he continually made every one about him feel.

Who would not be a child again? Well, we shall all be children again some day in God's great nursery of the invisible world.

And in the next he tells us what he thinks about money.

Ah, you see what the world is! "Money makes the

mare to go," saith an adage of antiquity unfathomable; and what saith a certain noble Roman, much quoted by Parliamentary gentlemen who keep private secretaries with a smattering of the classics?—

"Scilicet uxorem cum dote, fidemque et amicos,
Et genus, et formam, regina pecunia donat."

Yes, Queen Money, to use the Venusian's strong phrase, can do many things! She can give you a wife opulent, also unlimited credit, troops of friends, good blood (certified by the Heralds' College), and a magnificent personal appearance. Horace, however, being wise in his generation, did not say she could give you health, or happiness, or wit, or wisdom, or the love of a true woman. Queen Money is omnipotent within her own limits—the boundary of an aureate Alsatia, where every one must bow down and worship the fiend-god Mammon. Never does the poet, never the philosopher, never the gentleman enter there. There is no idyl or lyric in the precinct dedicated to the modern metallic Trinity—*£. s. d.* How often have I seen a brilliant young fellow drawn into the City whirlpool and losing all his youthful poetry, and becoming merely a money-making machine, with a taste for idiotic ostentation! It is very painful. Perchance the greatest of the sayings of Christ is, "Ye cannot serve God and Mammon." The moment money

becomes the chief idea in a man's mind, chivalry and poetry and religion perish out of him.

And in the last quotation I make from "A Fight with Fortune," the loving fellow expresses what his friends know well that he felt.

Somebody to love—lawfully, you know, of course—is what few men or women can do without. I should feel a very poor creature if there were not a pleasant group of friends (of both sexes, mind you, for I believe in female friendships) who would not be loyal to me as I to them. But the One to love! That is the light of life.

Early in May Mortimer Collins and his Secretary made a visit to the Mansion House, and remained with the Lord Mayor some days. The Lord Mayor's dinner to literary men took place on the first day of the visit. At this dinner Mortimer Collins met, for the first time, Robert Browning, whom he considered to be the greatest living poet.

"We sympathize on Greek subjects," said the poet.

“Yes,” said Mortimer, “but we often differ.”

“Never mind the difference,” said the poet, “it is the *indifference* I object to.”

Mortimer used afterwards to tell with great pride how Robert Browning had for years read his weekly article in the *Press and St. James's Chronicle*, called “Adversaria.”

After dinner Mortimer met Mr. Swinburne in the billiard-room, and both men got into an excited conversation on Greek poets.

“Euripides was a cad, sir,” Mr. Swinburne was saying with great warmth as the Secretary went into the room with the Lady Mayoress.

The Greek poets appeared to be such a fascinating subject that the Lady Mayoress presently remarked, “If some one does not separate those gentlemen, they will talk Greek poets all night.”

Mortimer Collins was at this time apparently in his usual health and spirits, and only those who knew him know how buoyant his spirits were. He was like a great happy school-boy out for a holiday. Although he did not go to

bed till two o'clock on the night of the literary dinner, he was up in the morning and out at seven to see, as he said, "what the City looked like early on Sunday morning." At half-past seven in the morning he stood on London Bridge, the only human being there.

He has given some little account of his visit to the Mansion House in the *Loiterer*, which I will quote. He says, writing from his bedroom in the Mansion House,—

I write this *Loiterer* somewhat after midnight in the centre, the very core of London. The mighty heart of the world's greatest City is lying still. I suppose the guardsmen who take charge of the Bank of England, whose roof I see from my bedroom window, have finished dinner. I came up to town by Mr. Carleton Blyth's coach from my Berkshire hut on Saturday, to attend that literary dinner which Lord Mayor Cotton made so pleasant a success. Mr. Blyth drove as well as usual—and where's the man who can drive better?—and, but for an east wind that blew dust into one's eyes and a near-wheeler in the last stage that would canter, the drive was delightful. There were great men among the banqueters. Robert Browning was there. I shook that honoured hand for

the first time. The sweet singer of Atalanta was there, and Locker the Horatian, and Froude the historic, and Houghton the patron poet. A female novelist or two enlivened the assemblage. Mr. Sala made the speech of the evening. That was Saturday. At what time the greatest poet of the day (or night) left the billiard-room and went home to ponder dithyrambics I know not. Next morning the Lord Mayor was at the church of St. Andrew Undershaft in state, that church having recently been restored, and this the opening day. I do not admire the restoration altogether; and the change of the fine old stained window, with portraits of Edward VI., Elizabeth, James I., Charles I., and Charles II., from the east to the west, I consider a mistake. Canon Barry preached a very good sermon, though rather in the wrong groove. Theology does not apologize for being at issue with science; it includes science. The forward-pushing clergy of the present day are too apt to substitute eloquence for knowledge. Canon Barry does not quite see that there is more science in the first chapter of Genesis than in all Huxley and Tyndall and Darwin.

Monday morning, and the ^{77th} Regiment, which Picton commanded at Waterloo, are at the door of the Mansion House with their tattered colours, to be placed in St. Paul's over Noble's famous monument to the officers and men (nearly 600) who died in the

The Regiment was at Waterloo.

Crimean campaign. Colonel Kent, on a charger that has been twice to India, once to Australia, and that Colonel Stratton rode through the Crimean war, presented the colours to the Lord Mayor. That royal rag! The mad whirl of many battles has worn it to threads, and now in the calm cathedral of London it will slowly drop to dust. War and peace are friends. If the gallant 77th had not been willing to die for the realm, there would be no Lord Mayor of London, no calm cathedral of St. Paul. When Colonel Kent and the Lord Mayor had exchanged speeches (excellent good on both sides), the regiment marched to St. Paul's, and the colours were solemnly presented. The Dean, receiving them, laid them on the altar of God; then, after fit ceremony, they were placed above the monument to those brave brothers of ours who died for England. Never have I been more impressed by any solemnity. When I saw those torn flags of many victories placed upon the shrine of everlasting peace, I wished to be young again, that I might choose another vocation, and use the sword rather than the pen in defence of religion and loyalty.

Friends of Mortimer Collins, who met him at the Mansion House, and saw him so full of health and spirits, found it difficult to realize that he was dead a few weeks after.

It was pleasant to see the big boyish fellow romping with the Lord Mayor's little children, playing blind man's buff, and all sorts of games. When playing battledore and shuttlecock he tossed the shuttlecocks so high in the old ball-room that they were both eventually lodged on the cornice of the walls, where they probably remained till the room was newly painted, or perhaps they are still there. Every one seemed to envy him his health and spirits at this time.

On the day that he left Knowl Hill for this visit to town, the first few chapters of "The Village Comedy" were published in the *Pictorial World*. The description of the village and villagers was so accurate (not being altogether complimentary to the villagers) that he expected to find all his windows broken when he returned, for there were some rough characters about. Nothing of the sort, however, happened; and the story continued to appear from week to week, causing great excitement in the neighbourhood. People could not imagine how the author knew so much about them. It did

not occur to them that a man might possess such insight as to be able to judge their whole character from some little incident.

Mortimer Collins was himself one of the characters in this story, and there is a good description of his cottage and mode of life. He had long looked forward to writing this story in a leisurely way; and had he commenced it some three years before, as he intended, he would probably have given a very different impression of his neighbours, for then good feeling prevailed in the village. But when "The Village Comedy" was commenced the whole place was full of malicious slanders; each person had something to say of his neighbours, and ill feeling prevailed.

Mortimer Collins hoped to do some good by his story, and although he only lived to write and publish half of it, it is probable that some few people learnt a lesson from it.

In the next paragraph I quote, from "Adversaria" of May 27, Mortimer Collins is happy on his favourite subject of birds

again. The emus are at Sir Gilbert East's place.

At a pleasant Berkshire mansion the other day I made the acquaintance of a pair of tame emus. They seem harmless enough, but are apparently fond of a practical joke. At first they were allowed to wander on the lawn at the entrance; but whenever the carriage drove up, and the footman jumped rapidly down to open the door, the emus at once ran after him and seized his hat. In consequence of this humorous habit, they have been confined to a turfed enclosure, where they receive human visitors with great courtesy. Last year the hen laid six eggs. These are of a mottled dark green, extremely beautiful; and the shell is so thick that one, mounted in silver, has been made into an elegant drinking-cup. As the hen is a very clean feeder, I suspect the eggs are good to eat, but the experiment has not in this case been tried. Ostrich eggs in aspic are extremely good, *experto crede*; I really cannot see why those of the emu should not be worth the epicure's attention. The other day I found a young man shooting at small birds close to the high road, and thereby breaking two Acts of Parliament at once. If, as is likely enough, he had no gun licence, he was of course breaking three. When I warned him that it was a matter for the police, he said, in a supercilious way, that he shot birds "for artistic

and scientific purposes." Verily, I thought, the school-master is abroad. This youth with the gun is artist and scientist; I, knowing it not, have treated him irreverently. Juvenal's saying, *maxima debetur puero reverentia*, assumes a new meaning now that youth has grown so singularly sapient. However, as I knew where this precocious personage was to be found, I requested the Superintendent of Police (who probably will care little for his art and science) to administer a warning.

The following letter refers to the verses by Mr. Campkin which I have already given in the first volume, page 50.

The original manuscript of them was framed and hung in the entrance-hall of the cottage, and so many friends wanted copies that they were at last printed.

Knowl Hill,
Oak Apple Day, 1876.

MY DEAR CAMPKIN,—Do you recognize these vigorous but too flattering tristichs? So many folk have wanted a copy that we have invoked the shade of Caxton to help us. Those long Aristophanic lines are no joke to copy.

When are you coming on the roof of Blyth's coach?

The breezy journey will inspire you with a poetic post-script.

The Missus wonders whether you have looked at our story in the Pictorial. She expects a compliment, and you have not sent her one, you churl!

Ever yours,

MORTIMER COLLINS.

At the end of May Mortimer Collins wrote as follows:—

Do not you, gentle reader, of whichever sex, remember that there once was summer? Was it not warm upon Thames in the twilight—

With indolent fingers fretting the tide,
And an indolent arm round a darling waist?

Was it not warm under linden avenues, with the full moon vainly striving to pierce the foliage, and only adding to the magic mystery? Was not champagne-cup enjoyable at noon on the bright lawn beneath the strong serenity of Helions? Those days are past. Snow is the heritage of May. This Easter, when friends came to see me, I hung up my mistletoe, and greeted them with "A Merry Christmas." As I write by a warm fire with a glass of mulled claret at hand, I hear the east wind howling furiously outside and

driving sleet against my windows. It would be quite enjoyable weather for December: in May, and at the summer end thereof, it is rather irregular.

Early in June the Lord Mayor and Lady Mayoress, with the Sheriffs and others, visited Mortimer Collins at his cottage. They had been to civic banquets at Bristol, Bath, and Reading; and from Reading they travelled by Mr. Blyth's four-horse coach, stopping at the cottage on the way for half an hour, and taking tea on the lawn. It was the day before this visit that Mortimer Collins was first observed not to be as well as usual. He went into Reading in the morning to meet the Lord Mayor, and the Lord Mayor remarked how ill he looked. He drove home again to dress for the dinner to be given in the evening by the Mayor of Reading, and then went back again to Reading and then home again at night. These four journeys of eight miles each, and the hurry and excitement of the day, no doubt made him worse; and although his brain remained as active and bright as ever to within two days of his death, he never looked

well again. His face became very pale, and he lost his activity of body. He tried to fight against it, and to make those about him believe he was well; but it was evident that his strength was going. He recorded the visit of the Lord Mayor in the following way:—

Whitsuntide has been pleasant every way. The Lord Mayor and Lady Mayoress and their suite have, as I remarked, passed this way. It was very enjoyable when they deigned to group themselves for half an hour on my lawn. My little Berkshire village was amazed. I suppose it does the small folk good to see the advent of the great folk; but to me small folk and great folk are very much alike. If, dear public, "Adversaria" is short, please forgive me. Would you this Whitsuntide weather, with charming ladies lounging on the lawn, with red chestnut and medlar in bloom, with my dogs imploring me to take a walk across the meadows to Medmenham by the Thames, expect me to work very hard? The flintiest of editors would not require such service.

The measure, arrangement, and rhyming of a sonnet are often subjects of argument amongst verse-writers. Mortimer Collins has more than

once stated in print what is his idea of the true sonnet. But in writing sonnets he did not always hold to the true way. He would write it in various ways. In *Punch* of June 17 there are three sonnets forming a poem called "Sonnets for the Sex," and all differently constructed. They seem to be defiantly done, as if the writer would show that he need not be bound by rules, since he could write so easily any way.

I think I may quote the last of these sonnets, not only because it is interesting, being written so shortly before his death, but because in one line,

"The easy strength that makes a joke of toil,"

Mortimer Collins writes what he felt himself. All who knew him felt that he had indeed that "easy strength."

Well, just another sonnet, Ladies fair :

Punch loves to see your exquisite soft ways,
To watch you in the summer's happy haze,
To braid poetic roses in your hair.
Only, he says to younger men, "Beware!"

The old philosopher whose length of days
Would veteran Methusaleh amaze,
Laughs at these boyish wooers void of care.
Ladies prefer brain and backbone and power,
The easy strength that makes a joke of toil,
The hand that masters either sword or pen :
So youngsters eager for a glorious hour,
Learn that the rapier's stronger than the foil,
Love Ladyhood, and live the life of men.

The next I quote from "Adversaria" of July 1. Christopher North was always a favourite with Mortimer Collins.

A few days before Mortimer's death, his Secretary was generously presented by Mr. Blackwood with all Professor Wilson's works, and Mortimer Collins was reading delightedly all through the "Noctes" once more.

Windermere! That lake, as I knew it in my boyhood, comes back to me when I open a charming volume just issued by Blackwood, "The Comedy of the Noctes Ambrosianæ." To the post-professor, Tory of Tories, I owe more than to any other man as to early education. *Blackwood's Magazine* taught me more than I learnt from all the books, classical, mathematical, philosophical, which it was my painful duty to

read. That magnificent entity, Christopher North, was to me a personal friend, the great teacher of the time; and when some thirty years ago I was foolish enough to publish a poem on Windermere, to him it was dedicated.

I have noticed that the present generation of critics cannot endure the "Noctes." I am not surprised. The Professor was too Homeric for the men of the day. He ate and drank like a Greek hero, and amusingly exaggerated his prowess in that way. We are quieter now. Sir Wilfrid Lawson's grave reprehensive glance terrifies us into an intense sobriety. It is much better, of course. A man like Wilson would have been much out of place at a time when stock-jobbing is the fashionable occupation, and hypocrisy the fashionable virtue.

Mortimer Collins always used quill pens, which he cut himself. He was exceedingly methodical in all his writing arrangements. He used to say that he cut his pen according to his subject. He always sealed his letters.

He gives us his own ideas on such matters in a little article in *Punch* of 8th July, just three weeks before his death, which he called "Mr. Oldfangle's Opinions."

Nothing can equal the grey goose-quill. You must cut it yourself with blade of keenest steel, and suit it to what you are about to write. A canzonet to a lady requires quite a different pen from a cartel to an enemy. How can the unvarying steel or gold be adapted to the ever-varying themes on which letters have to be written? Cut a pen to write a letter to your stock-broker, ordering him to sell Turks; would the same pen do to write to a lady a pleasant nonsensical reminder of a Richmond dinner? The thing is absurd. I am an old boy, sir, but I would not desecrate a letter to a friend or a lady by using the same pen which I used for business until its foul fringe were cast off from it.

“And you always seal your letters, Mr. Oldfangle?”

Always; the seal is older than the signature. My crest and motto are older than my name. There was *Sans Dieu Rien* upon my coat-of-arms before ancestor of mine could do more than make his mark. And consider this—when you seal a letter, the great recollection of your forefathers is brought before you in leisurely fashion. Is what you have written worthy of the crest and motto just fixed on the red wax? If not, for the honour of your ancestry tear up the epistle and think again. Sealing-wax, sir, is a great check to epistolary rashness. I hate this hasty age of adhesive envelopes and steel pens.

The following is a fragment of a letter to Miss Louisa C., written about a month before Mortimer Collins's death. He took great pride in the row of tall lime-trees in his garden, as may be seen from the continual allusion to them in his works. His landlord one morning meeting him at the gate, asked if he would mind having the limes cut, as they would interfere with the hay-carts coming from a neighbouring field.

For some time before his death any excitement made him turn pale, and he came into the house full of anger, and looking very white, at the mere idea of cutting his cherished limes.

Imagine old Wainwright's coming to ask to have my limes cut where they overhang the lane, because they are inconvenient for the hay-carts next door! Can you imagine my wrath?

It is curious that there is a reference to the Homeric hymn we were talking about in a chapter of the Comedy that appears to-morrow. . . .

Learning rhyme by rote is the accomplishment of a parrot. No real lover of poetry remembers it well. He has his own special passages, which he cannot

forget. They light up the emerald stretch of a great poem like

“Daffodils

Which come before the swallow dares, and take
The winds of March with beauty.”

Frances slowly improves, and we go over to Hall Place to lunch.

I have to wear a pair of socks of unequal sizes ; Frances says because the knitter of them never learnt geometry.

MORTIMER AND FRANCES.

The last paragraph that I shall quote from Mortimer Collins's works is from “Adversaria.” He had written the article under this heading in the *Press and St. James's Chronicle* regularly for many years. On this occasion he is speaking of the waste of literary power in periodical writing. He says,—

I confess when I look through the file of “Adversaria,” I think what a *magnum opus* it ought to be. But I chance to know that a few of my words in this desultory column have been read with pleasure by men of genius, aspirant young folk. So I plod quietly along this

winding, shady, flower-fenced lane of literature, leaving lofty charioteers to drive their four-in-hand on the high road of fame.

The last of the nonsense verses for "Knowl Hill Rhymes" were written about the beginning of July, to Mr. Edward Draper, in answer to some addressed to Mortimer Collins by him. That they may be understood I must also give Mr. Draper's lines, and these require some explanation.

His little son was staying at Henley with some relations, and the father came down to see how he was, and get some fishing. He brought the boy over to the Cottage at Knowl Hill one afternoon. For the rest Mr. Draper's lines will tell the tale. The boy is called familiarly Old-úrpic. The thirtieth line refers to a pair of dumb-bells which amused the child.

ADÁRD AND EVANNAH.

* * * * *

Thus spoke Adárd, while on the table lay
 In silver glory o'er a dish of delf,
 Three pike, once tyrants of the weedy deeps :

“These, loved Evannah, are my gifts to thee ;
I caught——.” Evannah push’d his gifts aside,
And standing high and massive as a rock
That bounds the coast of Cesaræa’s *isle*,
Cried, “ Bother fishing ! Tell me of Old-úrbiç.”
Old-úrbiç was the name they gave their boy,
A brown-hair’d, brown-eyed boy of eight years young.

“Thine offspring,” said Adárd, “is safe and well,
And bread and butter from his trencher glides
Like clouds that flit across an autumn sky.
But yesternoon I led him to the Hill
Whereon resides the giant Mertimor,
Where lawns, deep-slopen, linden-bower’d, lead
Southward in front towards the British sea,
Which, like a fairy lakelet, mirrors France
And other continental villages.

“Thence on the east is seen the castled mount
Of Dover. Westward the domain is bounded
By Tintagel ; and, looking to the north,
By misty heights of rugged Caledon,
Where kilted Scotsmen fly the antler’d deer,
And the fierce salmo-salar swallows towns.

“Thither I led Old-úrbiç. When he view’d
The Giant and the Lady of the House,
Before whose feet ferocious pigeons bend,
Old-úrbiç said, ‘ Father, I’m glad I came.’
Then, spying in a corner iron disks
Covered with hides, the spoils of many bulls,

And weighing tons, he flung them up to heaven,
 Where they evanish'd, far from mortal ken.
 And then he shouted in the antic phrase
 He learn'd in early babyhood, ' Hic est
 Alauda hilaris '—' Here's a jolly lark !'
 And with his merry laughter cleft the sky.
 The Giant smiled, and gave him dry champagne
 And bread and butter, flesh of savage lambs,
 And sausage stuff'd by Brunswick's warriors grim,
 All the which pleased Old-úrpic mightily.
 And then the Lady, and the Giant, too,
 Begg'd he might dwell with them for fourteen days
 (Though economic prudence might suggest
 To keep him but a week were better far)."
 Then spoke Evannah : " Errant husband mine,
 I wish Old-úrpic back once more to kiss him
 Ere he again depart. Let him with thee
 Return when next thou makest holiday,
 And after take him to the Giant's Hill."

(The which, translated from the feminine
 Into the masculine and coarser tongue,
 Stands thus : " Best let him rough it where he is
 Till he kick out his old and well-worn clothes,
 And after take him with you to the Hill
 In all the splendour of a brand new suit.")

She ceased. Delighted spheres attuned their pipes
 To symphonize assent and hymn her praise.

EDWD. DRAPER.

Mortimer replied to this in the same mock-heroic style; but the reply was sent in the name of the "Giantess." The thirty-third and following lines refer to the visit of the Lord Mayor and Sheriffs to the Cottage, and what was actually the fact, that the "Giantess," intending to make a new cotton gown, to receive the visitors, had not time to "put the stitches in." In the forty-second line there is a pun on the name of the gentleman who drove the coach, Mr. Carleton Blyth.

The Giantess who dwelleth by the Hill
 To Adárd sends greeting: Lo, the sheets are air'd,
 The bread and butter cut—no bread and scrape
 Such as the tender urchin gets at school,
 But new white manchet thick with creamy curd:
 Also the dry champagne is eager still
 To burst its bonds and cool Old-úrbic's lips;
 And if there be to him some drink more dear,
 As toast and water, or as senna tea,
 Delicious beverage of babyhood,
 It shall be deftly mingled. Keep not back
 The hilarious hope of thy right famous house
 To be in awkward new apparel dress'd,
 Cut by sartorial swell's abhorrèd shears.

Fain would he roll upon the lawn, but pride
Forbids new breeches to be stain'd with green :
Fain would he play at leap-frog with his host,
Surmounting Atlanteän shoulders. Ah!
What woe if newest jacket came to grief !
Avant the fell idea ! Let him come
In boyhood's oldest, well-accustomed suit,
With trouser-pocket where the knife and top,
The luscious bull's-eye and the favourite taw,
Long time have dwelt in happy partnership.

Thus farther saith the Giantess : Old clothes
Are our Titanic trimmings. Mertimór
Hath worn one suit since first he was full-grown.
His coat is like the schoolboy's famous knife,
Which, blade and handle many times replaced,
Was still the same. Sometimes the husk must go,
Sometimes the lining—but 'tis still the same,
That, when the savages, portentous crew,
Invented their great instrument, the Club,
He wore resplendent. And the Giantess,
Expecting from great London's Hall of Guild
Magog magnificent, the Lord thereof,
Not without Gog, and sworded Shire Reeves strong,
And lovely ladies of the Civic Court,
Did for herself a cotton gown devise,
To indicate her calm humility,
But had not time to put the stitches in

Ere at the gate arrived the lordly coach,
Pull'd sharply up by blithest charioteer,
And thence descending, all the stately throng
Spread in a painted pageant on the lawn,
Like peacocks in the radiant summer sun.

Wherefore the Giantess desires to see
Old-úrbc in no spick and span costume
As from a band-box stepping daintily,
The envy and disdain of ruder boys :
But rather in attire to boyhood dear,
Before conceit is born within the brain,
Before the healthy orchard-robbing taste
Has given way to a pert priggishness,
Which in our young Old-úrbc scarce can grow,
Or he would not be his dear father's son.

“ Old-úrbc ” came on the 8th and left on the 22nd of July, just six days before Mortimer's death ; so that he was the last visitor who stayed at the Cottage. His father came to fetch him away, and as he left the gate he bade him turn round and look once more at the place, and keep in his mind always that he had stayed with Mortimer Collins.

CHAPTER VII.

MORTIMER COLLINS AS A HUSBAND.

THERE is one point in Mortimer Collins's character which should be noticed, but on which it is difficult to comment. At his death it was remarked in one of the papers that in his domestic relations he was a model of constancy and kindness. He was even more than that. His relations with his wife were absolutely perfect. She was his friend and hourly companion. After the first month or two of their marriage the two were never separated for twelve hours, and were scarcely ever an hour apart. They worked and thought together. This fact is just mentioned because it must necessarily go some way in making an estimate of Mortimer Collins's cha-

racter. The constant companionship of a woman must have great effect in developing a man's character; and the constant companionship of a man must be of great benefit to a woman. They improve one another.

There is another reason why some little mention should be made of Mortimer Collins's love for his wife: it will give an opportunity of quoting some of the verses written to her. So far as the subject is concerned, they cannot of course interest the general public; but, putting aside by whom or to whom they were written, they are models of love verse, and should therefore be given to the public, though they were never intended for publication.

They are not laboured productions, but were generally thrown off in a few minutes as the thought came.

The first quoted was written to F. C. in 1874, and has been already published in the *Athenæum*.

Oh, touch that rosebud! it will bloom,
My lady fair!

A passionate red in dim green gloom,
A joy, a splendour, a perfume
That sleeps in air.

You touch'd my heart ; it gave a thrill
Just like a rose
That opens at a lady's will ;
Its bloom is always yours until
You bid it close.

Mortimer Collins used always to write verses to his wife on certain days in the year, such as her birthday, Valentine's Day, New Year's Day, April Fools' Day, &c., and post them at the village post-office. He disguised his handwriting that his wife might be puzzled when the letter arrived ; and with boyish delight he would watch her open it.

The following were written on her birthday in 1875. The writer tries to imagine that he knew of her birth the moment she was born. The blank in the second line can be filled by any name with two syllables accented on the first.

Ah, where was I, that happy day
My pretty —— came this way?
Surely the careless wandering boy
Felt in his heart a thrill of joy,
Saw in the sky a brighter gleam,
Had, as he stroll'd, a mystic dream
Of the fair child of wit and whim
That very moment born for him.

I don't know where, I don't know how,
But I will swear that I
Recorded a true marriage-vow,
In that July.

She came into the world for me:
I wonder if the summer sea
Whisper'd of her an amorous tale—
Or if the dulcet nightingale
Utter'd through the woods a word
Of the cooing little bird,
Just flown down from spheres divine,
To be mine, yes, always mine.

I care not how, I care not who,
Brought tidings from the sky,
But I will swear my bride I knew
In that July.

I knew her, yes, no matter how,
Even as I know her now—

A goddess with two loving eyes,
 A baby that was born too wise.

* * * * *

A lady who, in happiest mood,
 Could teach the world of Ladyhood,
 Since now she came to earth's green coast,
 Among the months shall I
 Revere the most (and kiss her most
 Therein) July.

Then, as if the writer were overflowing with
 verse and could not stop, he breaks out into
 this pretty little epigrammatic postscript :—

P.S.—I often think, my only love,
 The world would be more true,
 If half the ladies in the world
 Were half as good as you.

And don't you think, my only love,
 'Twere merrier 'neath the sky,
 If half the men in half the world
 Could love as well as I ?

The next is a sonnet written on Valentine's
 Day, 1874, and is an acrostic on the name
 Frances Collins. It was written at a time when
 a lawsuit was giving trouble.

FRANCES, my darling, Valentine is here :
Radiant and royal comes the laughing spring,
And everywhere the birds are carolling,
New nests are building, skies grow calm and clear,
Crocus and violet hail the growing cheer,
Earth gladdens to be rid of winter's sting.
Sweetheart and wife, my loving little thing,
Come gladden also with the happy year.
Oh, had I but the power, as now the will,
Life to make always pleasant to my own,
Leading her through green gardens of delight !
I, happy now, should then be happier still,
Nor envy poet crown'd, or king on throne,
Since my sweet kingdom is her bosom white.

The next were written to Frances Collins on
the 1st of April, 1876.

Now if to be an April Fool
Is to delight in the song of the thrush,
To long for the swallow in air's blue hollow,
And the nightingale's riotous music-gush,
And to paint a vision of Cities Elysian
Out away in the sunset-flush—
Then I grasp my flagon and swear thereby,
We are April Fools, my Love and I.

And if to be an April Fool
Is to feel contempt for iron and gold,

For the shallow fame at which most men aim—
 And to turn from worldlings cruel and cold
 To God in His splendour, loving and tender,
 And to bask in His presence manifold—
 Then by all the stars in His infinite sky,
 We are April Fools, my Love and I.

The next were written on the 20th February, 1875. The weather was very bad, and Mortimer, who liked being out of doors as much as possible, had been unable to go out all day. These lines were just thrown off in the ten minutes before dinner. They have been published since Mortimer's death in the *Athenæum*.

Fast falls the snow, O lady mine,
 Sprinkling the lawn with crystals fine,
 But by the gods we won't repine
 While we're together,
 We'll chat and rhyme, and kiss and dine,
 Defying weather.

So stir the fire and pour the wine,
 And let those sea-green eyes divine
 Pour their love-madness into mine :
 I don't care whether
 'Tis snow or sun or rain or shine
 If we're together.

The following sonnet, also published in the *Athenæum* since Mortimer's death, was written to Frances Collins in 1873 :—

Women there are who say the world is slow
 To recognize their scientific power ;
 Wherefore they fill with heat the flying hour,
 And let the beauty of their sweet life go
 Like water thro' a child's frail fingers. So
 Might the tree murmur not to be a tower,
 Might envy of the strong storm vex the shower
 That wakes sweet blossoms and makes brooklets flow.
 The lady whom I love has no such thought ;
 No stolid strength of mind shall make her weak,
 No folly sink her in the sad abyss
 Where these same scientific souls are caught.
 She knows a kiss befits a lovely cheek,
 Ay, and that rosy lips were made to kiss.

The next were written to Frances Collins on her birthday, in 1869.

This is my B——'s birthday :
 This is the day when she,
 Under the sky of bright July
 Came into the world for me.
 She came in the time of roses,
 The time when the sweet birds sing ;

To her belong both odour and song—
The beautiful loving thing.

Ah! why is there any trouble
For her, among roses born?
The rarest rose that in summer grows
Has oft the sharpest thorn.
And the eyes that are loving and lovely
Are often fill'd with tears;
And the tenderest heart feels most the smart
Of the dull world's saddening years.

But what could I do without her
In this dull world, alone?
Her soft white breast is my pillow of rest
When the cares of the day are flown.
Her beautiful daring spirit
Keeps my weary heart awake,
And my poet's pen shall conquer men
For my darling B——'s sake.

The next lines were written to Frances Collins on her birthday in 1874. The lawsuit which had been a source of great trouble to Mortimer Collins and his wife, was now just concluded. Coggia's comet was visible in 1874.

Now what shall I say to my beauty ?
Her birthday's already begun—
As I rhyme, both for pleasure and duty,
'Tis close upon one.

I'll say, she is sweeter than roses,
She sings like the rarest of birds,
And I love, when with me she reposes,
Her dear loving words.

She's the truest and happiest lover
Of song-bird and blossom and leaf ;
And I hope now the way to discover
To save her from grief.

We'll banish all care, and pass from it
Into regions of quieter life,
Since we walk'd beneath Coggia's comet,
My dear little wife.

I must win in the end, it is certain,
Whatever the critics' ill-will,
But we'll draw the green-foliaged curtain
Round quiet Knowl Hill.

Just a plunge now and then, for the picture
And drama, in London's abyss :
But you'll hear my unvarying stricture,
There's nothing like this.

Ah, we'll have happy moments, and clutch them
'Neath many a soft summer sky,
And the roses will bloom as you touch them
—So, darling, shall I.

Mortimer Collins has written much in his books on the subject of marriage, and as he did not write from imagination merely, what he has to say is perhaps of some value. Whatever his faults were, as a husband he was perfect. He and his wife were as thoroughly friends and companions as a couple of people of the same sex could be; and yet he never dropped into the rough familiarity which such companionship was likely to engender, but was to the last a chivalrous and courteous lover. I feel that I am awkward in my praise of him in this respect, and that anything I can say will give no adequate notion of this noble point in his character. I should like to quote a couple of sentences which show, better than anything I can say, how perfect were his ideas on marriage; and, as I said before, he did not write from imagination.

In his chapter on the "Marriage of Completion," in the "Secret of Long Life," he says,—

The ladies who raise a clamour for certain political and social privileges never hitherto allowed to women are so pertinacious and vociferous that we are sometimes misled into imagining them far more important and influential than they truly are. The great mass of gentlewomen look upon the movement with indifference or contempt, aware that woman's highest destiny is to marry—to be merged in her husband, and complete his character.

* * * * *

The best of us will find that he has something to learn from his wife . . . that there are subtler faculties in her nature enabling her to guide him in circumstances whereby he is himself perplexed.

"There are more things in heaven and earth, Horatio,
Than are dreamt of in your philosophy:"

and there are also more depths in a woman's nature than any modern philosopher will fathom. The man who has nothing to learn from his wife is simply a stolid blockhead, who will never learn anything from anybody.

Concerning the marriage of completion, these things may be affirmed. The man, becoming a husband,

becomes simultaneously a creator and a father; he creates a new soul in his wife; he exerts over her paternal authority and protection. Similarly the woman, on entering wifehood, is at once a mother and a teacher; she begins immediately to nurse, and foster, and educate. The terms husband and wife contain within themselves all other expressions of relationship; including these, they include much more than these. It is impossible to do more than indicate this fertile theorem, which will yield infinite significance to those who study it carefully. I merely repeat that in the supreme relation between two human beings all other relations are involved. Hence the marriage of completion completes not only the characters and destinies of the two persons concerned, but likewise all their conceivable functions. Comedies and novels are laughed at for ending with marriage, but the artist's unconscious instinct is true. To marry aright is to read the riddle of the world.

Before quoting the other paragraph, I should like to give one verse from the second canto of the "Inn of Strange Meetings," as yet unpublished. The scene of the poem is in Hades.

In Hades there's a sterling law of nature:

The poet who has a wife (a wife that's true,

And no mere product of the Legislature)

Finds that his very soul she travels through.

She hears him think, and coins his thoughts anew—

She is one with him: and when the great procession
Of thought is with him—royal retinue,

She has an equal purchase and possession,

She knows his inmost soul, and needs no word-
confession.

The next paragraph is from Mortimer Collins's novel, "Frances." The words are put into the mouth of Gabriel Shirley, one of those quaint poetic characters which Mortimer so loved to describe.

"A true wife has three functions to fulfil. She is your mother, teaching you many things, punishing you when you deserve it, nursing you in all your troubles. She is your daughter, learning from you, obeying you, receiving help and comfort from you. She is your very self, sharing your glory and grief, your triumph and trouble . . . being, in fact, not a part of you, but your inborn, inseparable self. The miserable failures of married life are caused by men and women who cannot understand these things."

"Are they so hard to understand?" asked Hugh Roland.

“Yes,” replied Gabriel Shirley, “thanks to the invincible conceit of people who want the universe made their own way. God made it admirably, to my mind, and he ordained marriage as the noblest outcome of the race. Ask me what I think the finest thing to be seen, and I say, *Man and wife*. Carry out my theory, Hugh. Be your own wife’s father; teach her all you know; treat her with paternal kindness and discipline. But be also your wife’s son; accept thankfully her teaching and guidance. And, above all, become one with her; give and take; learn to regard her as yourself, and yourself as her. That is marriage. It makes two one. It makes man woman, and woman man . . . or, rather, makes of the twain that which is sexless and perfect. Man and wife—true man and wife—are one; if one dies, the other is dead also. Their union is too intimate to admit of division. Their spirits will mingle elsewhere, but the survivor on this planet is a mere lay figure or residuum.”

CHAPTER VIII.

GENERAL REMARKS.

I HAVE, so far as I can, made Mortimer Collins speak for himself, and have quoted such of his writings and letters as show what were his tastes and opinions and mode of life, and who were his friends. There are many who will understand the man and sympathize with him, but there are many to whom he will seem incomprehensible; and some to whom he may perhaps appear ridiculous. There are people who cannot realize that so much strength and simplicity as were seen in Mortimer Collins can be united. They only understand *laborious strength*, and not *easy strength*. On the other hand, there are those who recognize in that same mixture of strength and simplicity an ideal nobility.

A man with every power of mind and body so highly developed was likely to have great faults, greater faults than a smaller man could find room for, as was remarked of some one else; but his faults were faults of the body rather than of the mind, and they were never concealed, either from his friends or his readers.

There is little more that I need say of him. The reader has, no doubt, made his estimate of his character by this time; but there are a few little points concerning him which might interest those who admire his writings.

The "Comedy of Dreams," which he used so freely for mottoes to his chapters, was an unwritten drama he had in his mind. Just before his death his Secretary was about to collect all the mottoes, that he might piece them together and form the drama. It is in the iambic trimetre, and is, I believe, the only original English verse in that metre. The scraps of this drama that have been published have attracted the attention of a few deep-thinking scholars, but they are "*caviare* to the general."

Some of the best of these scraps were written within eight days of the poet's death as mottoes for his novel, "The Village Comedy." The mottoes generally to his chapters were nearly always his own, though, like Sir Walter Scott, he often pretended to have found them from an old play or a sixteenth-century manuscript.

Verse-writing was so easy to him that he was prodigal with his verse, and not only wrote his letters in verse, but when he was cutting a new quill he would take up an odd bit of paper and write verse just to try his pen. His Secretary used to find many epigrams lying about that had been made just to try a pen. He took no care himself in preserving what he wrote.

He had a theory that mathematics and poetry were allied, and commenced a work on "Rythmic Algebra," but abandoned it because he was advised that the public would not be sufficiently interested in the subject to make the work pay, and he could not afford to work without payment.

I imagine there are few people who have no-

ticed the immense variety Mortimer Collins shows in his choice of metres. He would write a dozen Valentines or New Year's verses in an afternoon, and take pride in making each of a different metre; and he seemed even to suit the metre to the character of the person he was addressing.

All those elegant bits of "chaff," his letters in verse, only a small proportion of which have been given in this book, no doubt gave a great deal of pleasure to those to whom they were written. One which I have not given commences,—

DEAR CHARLIE,— Horace to his friends

Wrote pleasant letters long ago :
He cheer'd and chaff'd them, and the self-same ends
Are mine, as well you know.

So far as worldly matters were concerned it would seem to be Mortimer Collins himself that needed the cheering, as he had to make a continual struggle for a living, and had to suffer many disappointments and vexations. But he

had that happy disposition which money will not buy, and could give a great deal more pleasure to those about him than many a rich man can; and so he "cheered and chaffed" every one, whatever happened to himself.

He described this point in his character, a few days before his death, in the last chapter he ever wrote of "The Village Comedy." "Jack's friends," alluded to in the following sentence, were Mortimer Collins and his wife, who were characters in the story.

A man must be interpenetrated with dulness and depression like a sponge with water to resist the infectious gaiety of pleasant, unaffected folk like Jack's friends. They were people who took seriously enough the serious side of life, but who were not so drearily stupid as to neglect its humorous side. It was their belief that difficulties were made to be overcome, and that the contest against them should be resolute, yet mirthful; and without that belief the condition of a man of letters in England must be a melancholy failure. For, while England enjoys some of the highest culture in the world, in no country are so few books bought in proportion to material wealth; in no country are the servants of literature less honoured—unless indeed

they are opulent amateurs, or happen to become the fashion. Men hear Mr. Ruskin prophesying in the wilderness and maintaining that it is a fraud to read a book unless you buy it; then, with a smile at such impracticable opinions, they send to Mudie's for their light reading. Artists flourish: for your wife's portrait by Millais, or a rood of canvas covered with quasi-Greek figures by Leighton or Poynter, is a clear sign that you possess the chief of modern virtues—an ample balance at your banker's. But "writing fellows," as the leading literary journal of London calls those without whom it could not exist, require indomitable courage to make their way against the close-packed phalanx of astute publishers and malignant critics, and abundant humour to cheer their "uneasy steps over the burning waste."

The tone of this paragraph has just a suspicion of dissatisfaction in it—only a suspicion—but when we remember that a few days after those lines were penned the writer died of rupture of the heart, caused by excessive mental strain, we can only wonder that he did not complain more. When we remember this, and look again at that paragraph, it speaks volumes.

It is the cry of agony of a strong man who was

fighting his way through all sorts of difficulties, and yet was determined never to despair or break down. And his spirit never did break: 'twas only his heart.

Mortimer Collins was always pleased when he found intelligent people in the lower classes to talk to; and he was delighted if they appreciated his writings. Sometimes he received letters from people of this sort; people unknown to him, who wrote to say how they admired his works. I possess various bits of paper inscribed with very indifferent spelling, and with an indiscriminate use of capitals and stops, which were much cherished by Mortimer. One which I have received since his death I think I may quote, as it shows what impressions Mortimer made by his writings. It is from a shoemaker in Norfolk, of whom I had never before heard. He says,—

I see in the *Pictorial World* the Death of Your husband—Which I feel that I have lost a Friend and a Good Man.

I have read the letter called the *Loiterer*, and have

been so Gladened and Pleased with his good Genius. I am sure he was a very Good Man, therefore I hope the "Village Comedy" is comepleted, and that the remaining Parts which have not been Publish will continue to be Printed. And allso all his other works will be published. As then, If Pleased God, I and my family may have the Pleasure of reading them, and receive instruction thereby. Dear Lady I feel for you as I know your Lost is great and cannot be replaced.

The same man, writing again, says,—

I wish that myself could say or do something to cheer you up under your great lost. I knew that he must be a good Husband, as by his writeings he could shew to me and to all others who read his works and writings that he was a generous and Largehearted and Good Man. I thought his sayings and his writings so much like our Saviour's, that I and My Wife and family allways welcome the *Pictorial World* newspaper which contained some of His Letters called the *Loiterer* and the "Villadge Comedy." His wise saying and good Advice and instruction Highly enlightened us, and gave us Courage to work at our trade in a honest and straightforward way, and so forth. In conclusion I hope you will cheer up and make yourself happy, while Liveing he Your Husband Loved you, and i feel that if he could spake, He would say to you, be happy, be comfortable the same as you used to be.

CHAPTER IX.

DEATH.

ALTHOUGH Mortimer Collins had the appearance of perfect health and strength, he seems to have suffered from hereditary weakness of the heart, and this weakness was, no doubt, increased during an attack of rheumatic fever that he had in the winter of 1869-70. But he showed no signs of it till about six months before his death, and then not such signs as to cause any anxiety.

He first began to look ill in the early part of June. His face was very pale, and he did not seem to have his usual power of body; but his brain was as clear as ever.

He began to complain a little of his work pressing on him, and wished he could go to the

seaside and have a short holiday. But there were no serious symptoms till about ten days before his death, and then he began to suffer from difficulty of breathing, and could not lie down, and therefore could not get sleep. Just at this time Mr. Blackwood had made him a present of all Professor Wilson's works, and he used to spend the greater part of the night in reading the "Noctes Ambrosianæ." He was always so appreciative of other men's works, and he remarked over and over again how glad he was to have such pleasant reading while he was ill. He was very patient under suffering, and he sat patiently night after night reading the "Noctes," because he could not sleep. He seemed glad to be in the air as much as possible while he had such difficulty in breathing, and the moment there was daylight in those July mornings he would go and sit by the open window of his bedroom and read. The picture of him as he sat at that window night after night, or rather morning after morning, is for ever fixed in my mind. A

wistaria grew all round the window ; it was just showing its second blooms, and he enjoyed the scent of it so much. The wistaria seemed to form a framework round him as he sat there. He looked very pale, but seemed to have a brighter look than ever on his face, and his intellect seemed clearer than ever.

On Thursday, the 20th, he wrote to his friend and doctor, Byron Blewitt, telling him he fancied he was in a rapid consumption, and begging him to come to see him as soon as he could, and not let me know how seriously ill he was.

Mr. Blewitt did not arrive till Sunday, the 23rd. He saw what was really the matter, but thought it wise not to say what it was then, and recommended that Mortimer Collins should stop work at once and go away for a change.

Mortimer's son-in-law, Keningale Cook, had sent an invitation for him to stay with him at Richmond ; and as that would place him within convenient reach of his doctor, it was arranged he should go there. He continued to work till

Tuesday, though he had been unable to take any food but milk from the Saturday.

It was arranged that he should travel by road to Richmond, as a railway journey always irritated him, even when he was well.

On Wednesday morning he looked very white and weak, but he was still as brilliant as ever. I felt anxious about leaving him alone while I was packing, so I ran into the book-room every few minutes to see that he was going on well. I found him with a favourite robin in the room, a young one, who had made his acquaintance early in the summer. There is something inexpressibly touching in seeing a splendid big fellow like Mortimer Collins on terms of such familiarity with a little robin.

During the morning our great friend Miss Louisa C. came in to say "Good-bye" to us before we left. She remarked how very handsome Mortimer looked; he seemed to have an almost unearthly brightness on his face. This was the last time she saw him.

We reached Richmond at six o'clock on Wed-

nesday afternoon, Mortimer being very much worse for his journey; but he revived a little later in the evening. We were sitting in a room which looked over a large reach of the river. The sun had set behind some trees on one side of the river, leaving a beautiful soft glow over everything, and the moon was coming up on the other side. The red sunlight gradually died away from the water, and the pale moonlight became reflected there. Mortimer lay on the sofa enjoying all this intensely. He looked exceedingly handsome on that evening. The whole scene made a picture not to be forgotten by those who saw it.

About nine o'clock Mr. Blewitt came, and then I learnt the terrible truth. He promised the next day to bring Dr. Daldy or Dr. Herbert Davies, who were special doctors for heart disease.

Mortimer slept better than usual on Wednesday night, and was happy and cheerful as usual when he woke up at six o'clock; but about seven he began to sink, and from that time he gradually got worse. His mind occasionally wan-

dered during the day, but it was always on his work.

In the afternoon Dr. Daldy and Mr. Blewitt came. They gave him some medicine, and came again in the evening to see what effect it had. Then they gave him champagne, which he refused. I reminded him that it was his friend Mr. Draper's fiftieth birthday, that he was giving a party to celebrate it, and that he would be pleased to think we remembered him by drinking his health.

"Of course I'll drink his health, the dear old boy," said Mortimer, and he drank the champagne. The medicine and champagne brought some of the old brilliancy back, and Mortimer sat up in bed and talked metaphysics with the doctor, and "chaffed" him in his usual pleasant way.

The doctor remarked to him that he was humorous, and said no one would think, to hear him, that he had been so near death a few hours before.

"Is it not right to be humorous?" asked

Mortimer. Dr. Daldy seemed to think, under the circumstances, it was doubtful.

But Mortimer said seriously and bravely, "If I have been humorous, shall I not be humorous to the last?"

He never rallied again after this. His good friend, Mr. Blewitt, remained with him during the night, but he passed a very bad night. He was unable to sleep or lie still from the difficulty of breathing, and his mind wandered occasionally.

On Friday morning he was quieter, and seemed better able to lie still; but every now and then he started up, and said he must do his work. He kept fancying it was Thursday, which was the day for certain articles to be written, and always a very busy day with him. A little after one o'clock, in the middle of the day, as he was lying back on the pillow quietly, apparently asleep, only breathing heavily, he suddenly stopped breathing. There was no different sound in his last breath—he stopped quite suddenly.

A post-mortem examination showed that he had ruptured the right auricle of the heart.

He died on Friday, the 28th of July, 1876, and was buried on the following Tuesday in Petersham churchyard. His coffin was covered with a white pall, surmounted by a large wreath of white flowers, and there was a general absence of black amongst those who attended the funeral, as Mortimer objected to black being worn on such occasions.

Mortimer Collins had just completed his forty-ninth year when he died, but he gave the idea of being a much younger man. He was boyish, and did not seem to be wearing out, but rather to be developing his powers.

In a collection of his poems there are some pretty verses on death addressed to me, of which I quote three verses.

No: I shall pass into the Morning Land

As now from sleep into the life of morn;

Live the new life of the new world, unshorn
Of the swift brain, the executing hand;

See the dense darkness suddenly withdrawn,

As when Orion's sightless eyes discern'd the dawn.

I shall behold it : I shall see the utter
 Glory of sunrise heretofore unseen,
 Freshening the woodland ways with brighter green,
 And calling into life all wings that flutter,
 All throats of music and all eyes of light,
 And driving o'er the verge the intolerable night.

O virgin' world ! O marvellous far days !
 No more with dreams of grief doth love grow bitter,
 Nor trouble dim the lustre wont to glitter
 In happy eyes. Decay alone decays :
 A moment—death's dull sleep is o'er ; and we
 Drink the immortal morning air Earine.

To have him taken away so suddenly, in all
 the strength of his manhood and intellect, was
 a terrible trial to those who loved him ; but
 there is some pleasure now in thinking that he
 was taken when at his very best,

. . . Unshorn

Of the swift brain, the executing hand.

It is curious that he makes so many of the
 characters in his books die of heart disease. He
 often used to say that he thought it was the

pleasantest kind of death, as it saved one's friends the trouble of a lingering illness; but he had no idea that his heart was affected in any way.

His mother died in 1873 of weakness of the heart.

He opens his book, the "Secret of Long Life," with the following paragraph:—

Length of life wholly depends upon ideas. This Aphorism has a double significance. There are men who live longer in a day than others in a year: for their brain is thronged with thoughts, as the halls of an emperor's palace are thronged with knights and ladies, with courtiers and minstrels and guards. There is never dulness in the stately edifice, even when night comes, and the festival is over, the nightingales sing in the pleasaunce, and the rivulets murmur a soft under song. All the hours are full of life and thought. He who lives thus, though he die in youth, has a far longer span of existence than the peasant churl who ploughs and delves, eats and sleeps, unconscious of an idea; even than the lucky aristocrat, who has nothing to do save enjoy life, and who frequently finds himself extremely bored. And often it happens that the intense energy of a great thinker wears out his spirit's tenement, that he dies young, having left his work half

fulfilled. But he has lived long for all that; he needs no pity from those who deem it the acme of good fortune to pass a torpid century on this earth's surface.

This especially applies to Mortimer. He lived every moment of his life, and doubtless his "intense energy," as he so well expresses it, wore out his spirit's tenement.

The pretty cottage at Knowl Hill is deserted. The poetic spirit of the place is gone. The beautiful big dog, who loved his master so much, is dead.

There are many of us who loved Mortimer so intensely that his loss is a terrible agony to us, and yet his influence over us all was such that we feel we should never show signs of mourning, or grief, or sadness. We always speak cheerfully concerning him, for he made us all feel that death was not a thing to be feared. We do not regret that we can no longer have the times with him that he made all too pleasant, but we are grateful that we have had so much pleasure.

I will say no more, but will finish my work with the words of a friend.

“My acquaintance with Mortimer Collins began through the ‘Inn of Strange Meetings,’ that poem which seems to embody in an original form the favourite idea of so many deep thinkers that the Spirit of Man not only is to be, but always has been immortal. I remember being struck with the very clear and concise way in which he argued the question, showing that marvellous command of the English language which is such a striking feature in his writings. My admiration of his literary genius fast ripened into warm personal friendship when I came to know the varied powers he possessed, and that while using his pen with untiring vigour he was able to keep his heart and mind free, elevated and joyous, and undebased by the drudgery of a journalist’s work. He not only wrote poetry, but he made life a poem, and rejoiced if he was ever able to lead others to do the same. I should think no man ever worked harder in the profession of literature than he did, and yet he never seemed bored by it, or allowed others to share the

weariness and anxiety which he must often have suffered. I cannot help dwelling upon this, because it was such a striking feature in his character, springing as it did from that deep religion in his soul, which made him feel that life was full of God, and therefore an unjoyous spirit was unworthy of true manliness. Mortimer Collins was seen to the greatest advantage in the quiet of his country home, where it was my privilege often to visit him, and I never left him without bringing away some fresh pleasant thoughts and information on a variety of subjects—every object around, from the blade of grass at his feet, to the pigeons that soared above his head, seemed to give him food for thought. And how quickly and intuitively he would discriminate, and how clearly express, in a few forcible words, the right and wrong of any subject. He rejoiced in diffusing gladness. He made one feel that to make a heaven of earth, man has only to love not merely his wife and family, but all living things. How often must he have been irritated

by the clumsy remarks and narrow views of those with whom he conversed, and yet he was the most patient listener, curbing his knowledge till the right moment, and then by a pithy remark letting in the light. It was easy enough to be bright and intellectual in his presence.

“ With respect to his novels, there can be no doubt that they are a reflex of his mind, and in many instances, pictures of himself, and a fair representation of what he wished to be and would have been, had he possessed the means. This stamps them with an individuality so interesting to all who knew him, and makes them really rather psychological studies than stories. When healthy novels again come into fashion, readers will turn with grateful pleasure to some of Mortimer Collins’s books, and find in them that refreshing, buoyant spirit which makes them stand out in striking contrast to some of the laboured productions of the present day.

“ I have not nearly exhausted all I would like

to say of one to whom I owe so much—one who exemplified the truth that ‘to breathe is not to live,’ and at the same time proved that it was not necessary to seek for much change and excitement, but that the seeing eye and the hearing ear would find material for thought in the meanest things around one. What has been said of Michael Angelo applies in every respect to Mortimer Collins. ‘He was intensely gentle and tender, peculiarly sensitive to kindness. Beneath the deep lines of power and passion which seamed his face there gleamed an expression of infinite tenderness such as his life did not belie. Spirits at once so tender and strong fare ill in this rough world, and are only known when they have passed beyond its praise and blame and their hearts are stilled to its tumult.’ ”

THE END.